TWO SIEGES OF PARIS

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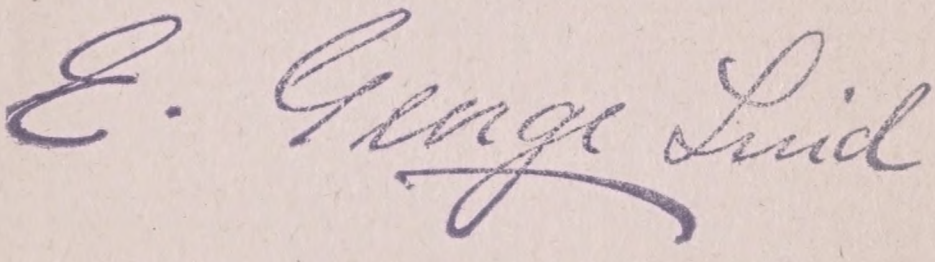

F. A. Carter

TWO SIEGES OF PARIS

Or, A Girl of the Commune

BY

G. A. HENTY

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A GIRL OF THE COMMUNE.

CHAPTER I.

JEREMIAH BRANDER was one of the most prominent personages in the Cathedral town of Abchester. He inhabited an old-fashioned, red brick house near the end of the High Street. On either side was a high wall facing the street, and from this a garden, enclosing the house, stretched away to a little stream some two hundred yards in the rear; so that the house combined the advantage of a business residence in front, with those of seclusion, an excellent garden, and an uninterrupted view behind.

Jeremiah Brander enjoyed, in a very large degree, the confidence and respect of his fellow-townsmen. His father and his grandfather had been, like himself, solicitors, and he numbered among his clients most of the county families round. Smaller business he left to the three younger men who divided between them the minor legal business of the place. He in no way regarded them as rivals, and always spoke of them benevolently as worthy men to whom all such business as the collection of debts, criminal prosecutions, and such matters as the buying and selling of houses in the town, could be safely entrusted. As for himself he preferred to attend only to business in his own line, and he seldom accepted fresh clients, never, indeed, until a new-comer had taken his place among the accepted society of the county.

In the public business of the city, however, he played a very important part. He was Town Clerk, treasurer of several so-

cieties, solicitor to the Abchester County and City Bank, legal adviser of the Cathedral Authorities, deacon of the principal Church, City Alderman, president of the Musical Society, treasurer of the Hospital, a director of the Gas Company, and was in fact ready at all times to take a prominent part in any movement in the place.

He was a man of some fifty years of age, inclined to be stout, somewhat florid in complexion, and always dressed with scrupulous care. There was nothing about him to indicate that he belonged to the legal profession. His talk as a rule was genial and almost cheery, but his manner varied according to the circumstances. In his capacity as treasurer he was concise and business-like; in matters connected with the Church he was a little given to be dogmatic, which, considering the liberality of his subscriptions to all the Church objects and charities was but natural.

As president of the Musical Society he was full of tact, and acted the part of general conciliator in all the numerous squabbles, jealousies, and heart-burnings incidental to such associations. In every one of the numerous offices he filled he gave unbounded satisfaction, and the only regret among his fellow-townsmen was that he had on three occasions refused to accept the honor of the Mayoralty, alleging, and with a fair show of reason, that although ready at all times to aid to the utmost in any movement set afoot for the advantage of the city, it was impossible for him to spare the time required to perform properly the duties of Mayor.

Jeremiah Brander had married the daughter of a gentleman of an old county family which had fallen somewhat in circumstances. It was rumored at the time that he had lent some assistance to the head of the family, and that the match was scarcely a willing one on the lady's part. However that might be, no whisper had ever been heard that the marriage was an unhappy one. It was regarded as rather a come-down for her, but if so she never showed that she felt it as a fall. The marriage had certainly improved his standing in the county. His wife formed a sort of link between him and his clients, and he

occupied a considerably better position among them than his father had done, being generally accepted as a friend as well as a legal adviser.

It is not to be supposed that so successful a man had no detractors. One of his legal brethren had been heard to speak of him contemptuously as a humbug. A medical practitioner who had failed to obtain the post of House Surgeon at the Hospital, owing to the support the President had given to another competitor for the post, had alluded to him bitterly as a blatant ass; and a leading publican who had been fined before the magistrates for diluting his spirits, was in the habit of darkly uttering his opinion that Jerry Brander was a deep card and up to no good.

But as every great man has his enemies, the opinion of a few malcontents went for nothing in the general concensus of admiration for one who was generally regarded as among the pillars of Abchester society, and an honor to the city.

"It is high time you did something, Jerry," his wife said to him one morning after their three daughters had left the breakfast-table.

"In what way, Eliza?" Mr. Brander said, looking up from his newspaper; "it seems to me I do a good deal."

"You know what I mean," she said, sharply. "You know you promised me a hundred times that you would give up all this miserable business and settle down in the county. The girls are growing up, Mary has just left Girton and is of an age to go into society."

"She may be of age," Mr. Brander said, with an irritability unusual to him, "but it strikes me that society is the last thing she is thinking of. We made a mistake altogether in giving way to her and letting her go to that place; she has got her head full of all sorts of absurd ideas about woman's mission and woman's duties, and nonsense of that sort, and has got out of hand altogether. You have not a shadow of influence over her, and I can't say that I have much more. Thank goodness her sisters don't take after her in any way."

"Well, that is all true," Mrs. Brander said, "and you know

we have agreed on that subject for a long time, but it is no answer to my question. I have been content to live all these years in this miserable dull place, because I was fool enough to believe your promise that you would in time give up all this work and take a position in the county."

"To some extent I kept my promise," he said. "There is not a week that we don't drive half-a-dozen miles, and sometimes a dozen, to take part in a dull dinner."

"That is all very well so far as it goes, but we simply go to these dinners because you are the family lawyer and I am your wife."

"Well, well, you know, Eliza, that I was in treaty for the Haywood's Estate when that confounded mine that I had invested in went wrong, and fifteen thousand were lost at a blow —a nice kettle of fish we made between us of that."

"We," she repeated, scornfully.

"Yes, we. You know perfectly well that before I went into it I consulted you. The mine was paying well then, and at the rate I bought in would have paid twenty per cent. on the investment. I told you that there was a certain risk always with these mines, and that it was either a big addition to our income or a total loss."

"Yes, but you said that coal mines were not like other mines."

"And as a rule they are not," he said, "but there was first that great strike, then a fall in the price of coal, and then just when things began to look better again we came upon that fault that nobody had dreamt of being there, and then the whole thing went to smash. You must not be impatient. I am as anxious as you are, Eliza, to have done with all this, and I hope by the time Clara and Julia are ready to come out, I may be able to carry out the plans we have always had—I as much as you. Tancred takes a great deal of the work off my hands now, and I can see that he has the confidence of most of my people. In another couple of years I shall have no fear of the business falling off if I hand it over to him entirely. You know he has only a fifth share, and I have no doubt he will be

glad to arrange to pay me half or perhaps three-fifths when I retire. Now I must be going across to the office."

The office was situated in a smaller house standing opposite the lawyer's residence. In his father's time a portion of the ground floor of the house was devoted to business purposes, but after his marriage Jeremiah Brander had taken the house opposite and made it his place of business.

About twelve o'clock a gig drew up at the door; a moment later a young clerk came in.

"Doctor Edwards wishes to speak to you, Mr. Brander."

"Show him in."

"Well, doctor," he said, as his visitor entered, "it is seldom that I see you here, though we meet often enough elsewhere. Come you to buy or to sell, or do you want a will prepared or a patient sued? If so you know that's altogether out of my line."

"I quite understand that, Brander," the other said, as he took the armchair the lawyer pointed out to him. "No, I have come to tell you something you will be very sorry to hear. I have just come in from Fairclose. I had a note from Hartington last night asking me to go over first thing this morning."

"He does not look like a man who would require professional services, doctor; he is sixty, I suppose, but he could tire out most of the younger men either across country or after the partridges."

"Yes, he looks as hard as iron and sound as a roach, but appearances are deceptive. I should have said as you do yesterday if anyone had asked me. I have come to tell you to-day in confidence that he has not many months, perhaps not many weeks to live."

The lawyer uttered an exclamation of surprise and regret.

"Yes, it is a bad business," the doctor went on, "he told me that when he came back from hunting yesterday he went upstairs to change when suddenly the room seemed to go round. Fortunately he had just sat down on a couch and taken off his top boots, and he fell sideways on to it. He says he was insensible for about half an hour; the first thing he was conscious of was the servant knocking at the door, to say that dinner

was ready; he told the man that he did not feel well and should not go down; he got off his things and lay down for an hour and then felt well enough to write the note to me. Of course I made a thorough examination of him, and found that, as I feared, it was a bad case of heart disease, probably latent for a long time, but now I should say making rapid progress. Of course I told him something of the truth.

"'Is it as bad as that?' he said. 'I have felt a lot of palpitation lately after a hard run with the hounds, and fancied something must be wrong. Well, say nothing about it, doctor; when it comes it must come, but I don't want my affairs to be discussed or to know that every man I meet is saying to himself 'poor old buffer, we shan't have him long among us.'

"Then he said more seriously, 'I would rather it should be so than that I should outgrow my strength and become a confirmed invalid. I have enjoyed my life and have done my best to do my duty as a landlord and as a magistrate. I am as prepared to die now as I should be twenty years on. I have been rather a lonely man since I lost my wife. Cuthbert's ways are not my ways, for he likes life in London, cares nothing for field sports. But we can't all be cast in one groove, you know, and I have never tried to persuade him to give up his life for mine, why should I? However, though I wish you to tell no one else, I should be glad if you will call on Brander and ask him to drive over. I made my will years ago, but there are a few matters I should like to talk over with him.'"

"This is sad, indeed," the lawyer said, sympathetically. "The Squire—everyone about here calls him the Squire, you know, though there are men with broader acres than his in the neighborhood—will be terribly missed. Dear, dear, it will make a sad gap indeed: how long do you think he is likely to last?"

"He might go at any moment, Brander; but as he has rallied from this shock it may be some little time before he has another. I should give him perhaps a couple of months. By the way, I think his son ought to be informed of it."

"I will ask him about it," the lawyer said. "Of course

Cuthbert ought to know, but may be the Squire will keep it entirely to himself. I should say there is nothing that would upset him more than the thought of being fretted over, and I am not sure that he is not right. Of course I shall drive over there this afternoon."

After Dr. Edwards had left, Jeremiah Brander sat for a long time in deep thought. Once the clerk came in to ask for instructions about a deed that he was drawing up, but he waved him away impatiently. "Put it aside," he said, "I cannot see to it just now, I am busy, and not to be disturbed for the next hour, whoever comes."

It was evidently a difficult problem Jeremiah Brander had to solve. He took out his bank-book and went though his payments for a long while back and then went through some bundles of old checks. One of these he took off the file; it was for the sum of fifteen thousand pounds, made payable to self.

"It is lucky now," he muttered, "that I drew it, as I didn't want it known even in the bank what I was putting the money into," then from a strong box with the name "J. W. Hartington," he took out a bundle of documents, many of which were receipts for money signed by the Squire, carefully examined the dates and amounts, and put them down on a piece of paper.

"There would be no difficulty about the signature," he said; "none whatever; a child could imitate it."

Laying one of the sheets before him he wrote on a sheet of foolscap "J. W. Hartington" a score of times, imitating the somewhat crabbed handwriting so accurately that even an expert would have had some difficulty in detecting the difference; he then tore the sheet into small pieces, put them into the heart of the fire, and watched them shrivel up to nothing.

"I think it could be done without the slightest risk," he said to himself, "if one managed the details carefully." Then he sat down and remained for half an hour without stirring. "It can be done," he said at last, "it is well worth trying; the property ought to be worth seventy thousand, but at a forced sale it might go for fifty-five or sixty. I reckoned last week that I could sell out my stocks for twenty-six thousand, which, with

the fifteen thousand, would bring it over forty, and I could raise the balance on the estate without difficulty; then with the rents and what I shall draw for this business, I shall be in clover." He locked up the papers carefully, put on his hat, and went across the road to lunch.

There was no trace in his face or manner of the grave matters that had occupied his thoughts for the last two hours. He was cheerful and even gay over the meal. He joked Mary about the advancement of women, told the other girls that he intended that they should take lessons in riding, gave them an amusing account of the meeting of the Musical Society he had attended the evening before, and told his wife that she must dress specially well at the dinner they were going to that evening, as he had heard that most of the county big-wigs would be there.

Mr. Brander was always pleasant in the bosom of his family, occasionally sharp words might pass when he and his wife were alone, but when the girls were present he was always the genial father. There is no better advertisement for a man than his children's talk. They are unconsciously his best trumpeters, and when Mr. Brander's name was mentioned and his many services to his townsmen talked over, the fact that he was one of the best and kindest of men in his family circle, and that his girls positively worshipped him, was sure to be adduced as final and clinching evidence of the goodness of his character.

After lunch he went down to the bank and had a private interview with the manager.

"By the bye," he said, after a short talk, "I have a client who wants to buy fifty shares."

The manager glanced sharply at him.

"They stand at a premium," Mr. Brander went on, as if not noticing the glance; "though they have fallen thirty shillings lately. It is not an investment I should myself recommend, but at the same time, for various reasons, I did not care to endeavor to dissuade him; it would scarcely do for it to be reported that I had said anything to the disadvantage of this institution, standing as I do in the position of its solicitor. I

think you mentioned the other day that you held rather more shares than you cared for, perhaps you could let me have some?"

The other nodded. "I could part with fifty," he said, dryly.

"Let me think, when was the last board meeting?"

"This day fortnight."

"I have rather neglected the matter in the pressure of business," Mr. Brander said, quietly, "and my client thinks the matter is already concluded, so perhaps it would be as well to date the transfer on the day after the board meeting, and I will date my check accordingly."

"It will be all the same to me," the manager said, "shall I draw out the transfer at once?"

"Do so. The shares stand at six pounds ten, I think, so I will draw you out a check for three hundred and twenty-five pounds. That will be right, I think," and he wrote a check and handed it across to the manager.

"What name shall I put in as the purchaser, Mr. Brander?"

"James William Hartington."

The manager lifted his brows and hesitated for a moment, but then, without a remark, filled in the transfer, dating it as requested.

"I must get two of the clerks to witness my signature," he said.

The lawyer nodded.

Two young clerks were fetched up by the messenger.

"I only want you to witness my signature," the manager said, as he signed his name. "Please to sign here, Mr. Karford; now Mr. Levison, you sign underneath." He held his finger to the spot where they were to sign in such a way that they could not even if they wished read the name inserted in the body of the document.

"I will take it away with me and obtain Hartington's signature," Mr. Brander said, after they had left the room, "I am going over to see him now. I will send it in to you before the next board meeting, and by the way it would be as well when you get it stamped to pass it in with several others. I know

how these things are done, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the directors don't even glance at the names on the transfers. Of course they are nothing to them, they have other things to think about, but there might possibly be some remark at your transferring some of your shares just at the present moment. By the way," he said, carelessly, "I don't think if I were you I would make any further advances to Mildrake. Of course, he has a big business, and no doubt he is all right, but I have learned privately that they are not doing as well as they seem to be, and I know the bank is pretty deep there already."

The manager turned somewhat paler, but said, though with manifest effort—

"They are perfectly safe, Mr. Brander, as safe as a bank."

"No doubt, no doubt, Mr. Cumming, but you know all banks are not perfectly safe. Well, I dare say you can manage that for me."

"Certainly, there can be no difficulty whatever about it. I have ten or twelve other transfers, and there will doubtless be some more before next board meeting. The affixing the stamp is a purely mechanical business."

After the lawyer had left Mr. Cumming sat for some time passing his hand nervously over his chin.

"Brander evidently has an idea that all is not right," he thought to himself. "Of course he cannot know how things really stand or he would never have let Hartington take shares. It is a curious transaction altogether, and I cannot make head nor tail of it. However, that is no business of mine. I will cash the check at once and send the money to town with the rest; if Mildrake can hold on we may tide matters over for the present; if not there will be a crash. However, he promised to send me forty-eight hours' notice, and that will be enough for me to arrange matters and get off."

Returning to his office the lawyer found his gig waiting at the door, and at once drove over to Fairclose, Mr. Hartington's place.

"I am grieved, indeed, to hear the news Edwards brought me

this morning," he said, as he entered the room where the Squire was sitting.

"Yes, it is rather sudden, Brander, but a little sooner or a little later does not make much difference after all. Edwards told you, of course, that I want nothing said about it."

"That is so."

"Nothing would annoy me more than to have any fuss. I shall just go on as I have before, except that I shall give up hunting; it is just the end of the season, and there will be but two or three more meets. I shall drive to them and have a chat with my friends and see the hounds throw off. I shall give out that I strained myself a bit the last time I was out, and must give up riding for a time. Have you brought my will over with you?"

"Yes, I thought you might want to add something to it."

"That is right, there are two or three small legacies I have thought of; there is a list of them."

Mr. Brander took out the will and added a codicil. The legacies were small ones of ten or twenty pounds to various old people in the village, and the work occupied but a few minutes. The housekeeper and one of the men were called up to witness the signature, and when they had retired Mr. Brander sat chatting for half an hour on general topics, Mr. Hartington avoiding any further allusion to the subject of his illness. Mr. Brander got back in time to dress comfortably for dinner.

"Really, Mary," he said, when he went into the drawing-room where his wife and Mary were waiting ready for him, "I do think you might dress yourself a little more brightly when we are going to such a house as we are to-night. I don't say that that black silk with the lace and those white flowers are not becoming, but I think something lighter and gayer would be more appropriate to a young girl."

"I don't like colors, father, and if it hadn't been for mamma I should never have thought of getting these expensive flowers. I do think women lower themselves by dressing themselves as butterflies. No wonder men consider they think of nothing but dress and have no minds for higher matters."

"Pooh, pooh, my dear, the first duty of a young woman is to look as pretty as she can. According to my experience men don't trouble themselves much about the mind, and a butterfly after all is a good deal more admired than a bee, though the bee is much more useful in the long run."

"If a woman is contented to look like a butterfly, father, she must be content to be taken for one, but I must say I think it is degrading that men should look upon it in that light. They don't dress themselves up in all sorts of colors, why should we."

"I am sure I can't tell you why, Mary, but I suppose it is a sort of instinct, and instincts are seldom wrong. If it had been intended that women should dress themselves as plainly and monotonously as we do, they would not have had the love of decorating themselves implanted almost universally among them. You are on the wrong track, child, on the wrong track althogether, and if you and those who think like you imagine that you are going to upset the laws of nature and to make women rivals of men in mind if not in manner, instead of being what they were meant to be, wives and mothers, you are altogether mistaken."

"That is only another way of putting it, father, that because woman have for ages been treated as inferiors they ought always to remain so."

"Well, well, my dear, we won't argue over it. I think you are altogether wrong, but I have no objection to your going your own way and finding it out at last for yourself, but that does not alter my opinion that on an occasion of a set dinner-party in the county where everybody will be in their fullest fig, that dress, which is pretty and becoming enough in its way, I admit, can hardly be considered as appropriate."

Mary did not answer, but gave an almost imperceptible shrug of her shoulders, expressing clearly her absolute indifference to other people's tastes so long as she satisfied her own. Mary was indeed decided in most of her opinions. Although essentially feminine in most respects, she and the set to which she had belonged at Girton, had established it as a principle to their

own satisfaction, that feminine weaknesses were to be sternly discouraged as the main cause of the position held relatively to men. Thus they cultivated a certain brusqueness of speech, expressed their opinion uncompromisingly, and were distinguished by a certain plainness in the fashion of their gowns, and by the absence of trimmings, frillings, and similar adornments.

At heart she was as fond of pretty things as other girls of her age, and had, when she attired herself, been conscious that she felt a greater satisfaction at her appearance than she ought to have done, and doubted whether she had not made an undue concession to the vanities of society in the matter of her laces and flowers. She had, however, soothed her conscience by the consideration that she was at home but for a short time, and while there she might well fall in with her parents' views, as she would be soon starting for Germany to enter upon earnest work. Her father's remarks then were in a sense satisfactory to her, as they showed that, although she had made concessions, she had at least gone but half-way.

The dinner passed off well. Mary was fortunate in being taken down by a gentleman who had advanced views on the necessity of British agriculturists adopting scientific farming if they were to hold their own against foreign producers, and she surprised him by the interest she exhibited in his theories. So much so, that he always spoke of her afterwards as one of the most intelligent young women he had ever met.

Mr. Brander was in remarkably good spirits. On such occasions he entirely dropped his profession, and showed a keen interest in all matters connected with the land. No one would that evening have supposd that his mind was in the smallest degree preoccupied by grave matters of any kind.

CHAPTER II.

As his father had said, Cuthbert Hartington's tastes differed widely from his own. Cuthbert was essentially a Londoner, and his friends would have had difficulty in picturing him as engaged in country pursuits. Indeed, Cuthbert Hartington, in a scarlet coat, or toiling through a turnip field in heavy boots with a gun on his shoulder, would have been to them an absurd anomaly.

It was not that he lacked strength; on the contrary, he was tall and well, if loosely, built. Grace is not a common manly attribute, but he possessed it to an eminent degree. There was a careless ease in his manner, an unconscious picturesqueness in his poses, a turn, that would have smacked of haughtiness had there been the slightest element of pride in his disposition, in the curve of the neck, and well-poised head.

His life was chiefly passed among artists, and like them as a class, he affected loose and easy attire. He wore turn-down collars with a carelessly-knotted necktie, and a velvet jacket. He was one of those men whom his intimates declared to be capable of doing anything he chose, and who chose to do nothing. He had never distinguished himself in any way at Harrow. He had maintained a fair place in his forms as he moved up in the school, but had done so rather from natural ability than from study. He had never been in the eleven, although it was the general opinion he would have certainly had a place in it had he chosen to play regularly. As he sauntered through Harrow so he sauntered through Cambridge; keeping just enough chapels and lectures to avoid getting into trouble, passing the examinations without actual discredit, rowing a little, playing cricket when the fit seized him, but preferring to take life easily and to avoid toil, either mental or bodily. Neverthe-

less he read a great deal, and on general subjects was one of the best informed men of his college.

He spent a good deal of his time in sketching and painting, art being his one passion. His sketches were the admiration of his friends, but although he had had the best lessons he could obtain at the University he lacked the application and industry to convert the sketches into finished paintings. His vacations were spent chiefly on the Continent, for his life at home bored him immensely, and to him a week among the Swiss lakes, or in the galleries of Munich or Dresden, was worth more than all the pleasures that country life could give him.

He went home for a short time after leaving the University, but his stay there was productive of pleasure to neither his father nor himself. They had not a single taste in common, and though Cuthbert made an effort to take an interest in field sports and farming, it was not long before his father himself told him that as it was evident the life was altogether distasteful to him, and his tastes lay in another direction, he was perfectly ready to make him an allowance that would enable him either to travel or to live in chambers in London.

"I am sorry, of course, lad," he said, "that you could not make yourself happy with me here, but I don't blame you, for it is after all a matter of natural disposition. Of course you will come down here sometimes, and at any rate I shall be happier in knowing that you are living your own life and enjoying yourself in your own way, than I should be in seeing you trying in vain to take to pursuits from which you would derive no pleasure whatever."

"I am awfully sorry, father," Cuthbert had said. "I heartily wish it had been otherwise, but I own that I would rather live in London on an almost starvation income than settle down here. I have really tried hard to get to like things that you do. I feel it would have been better if I had always stayed here and had a tutor; then, no doubt, I should have taken to field sports and so on. However, it is no use regretting that now, and I am very thankful for your offer."

Accordingly he had gone up to London, taken chambers in

Gray's Inn, where two or three of his college friends were established, and joined a Bohemian Club, where he made the acquaintance of several artists, and soon became a member of their set. He had talked vaguely of taking up art as a profession, but nothing ever came of it. There was an easel or two in his rooms and any number of unfinished paintings; but he was fastidious over his own work and unable from want of knowledge of technique to carry out his ideas, and the canvases were one after another thrown aside in disgust. His friends upbraided him bitterly with his want of application, not altogether without effect; he took their remonstrances in perfect good temper, but without making the slightest effort to improve. He generally accompanied some of them on their sketching expeditions to Normandy, Brittany, Spain, or Algiers, and his portfolios were the subject of mingled admiration and anger among his artist friends in St. John's Wood; admiration at the vigor and talent that his sketches displayed, anger that he should be content to do nothing greater.

His days were largely spent in their studios where, seated in the most comfortable chair he could find, he would smoke lazily and watch them at work and criticise freely. Men grumbled and laughed at his presumption, but were ready to acknowledge the justice of his criticism. He had an excellent eye for color and effect and for the contrast of light and shade, and those whose pictures were hung, were often ready enough to admit that the canvas owed much of its charm to some happy suggestion on Cuthbert's often ready part.

Every two or three months he went home for a fortnight. He was greatly attached to his father, and it was the one drawback to the contentment of his life that he had been unable to carry out the Squire's wishes, and to settle down with him at Fairclose. He would occasionally bemoan himself over this to his friends.

"I am as bad as the prodigal son," he would say, "except that I don't get what I deserve, and have neither to feed on husks nor to tend swine; but though the fatted calf would be ready for me if I were to return I can't bring myself to do so."

"I don't know about being a prodigal," Wilson, one of the

oldest of his set would grumble in reply, "but I do know you are a lazy young beggar, and are wasting your time and opportunities; it is a thousand pities you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth. Your father ought to have turned you adrift with an allowance just sufficient to have kept you on bread and butter, and have left you to provide everything else for yourself; then you would have been an artist, sir, and would have made a big name for yourself. You would have had no occasion to waste your time in painting pot-boilers, but could have devoted yourself to good, honest, serious work, which is more than most of us can do. We are obliged to consider what will sell and to please the public by turning out what they call pretty pictures—children playing with dogs, and trumpery things of that sort. Bah, it is sickening to see a young fellow wasting his life so."

But Cuthbert only laughed good-temperedly, he was accustomed to such tirades, and was indeed of a singularly sweet and easy temper.

It was the end of the first week in May, the great artistic event of the year was over, the Academy was opened, the pictures had been seen and criticised, there was the usual indignation at pictures being hung generally voted to be daubs, while others that had been considered among the studios as certain of acceptance, had been rejected. Two or three of Cuthbert's friends were starting at once for Cornwall to enjoy a rest after three months' steady work and to lay in a stock of fresh sketches for pictures for the following year.

"I will go with you," Cuthbert said when they informed him of their intention, "it is early yet, but it is warm enough even for loafing on the rocks, and I hate London when it's full. I will go for a fortnight anyhow," and so with Wilson and two younger men, he started for Newquay, on the north of Cornwall. Once established there the party met only at meals.

"We don't want to be doing the same bits," Wilson said, "and we shall see plenty of each other of an evening." Cuthbert was delighted with the place, and with his usual enthusiasm speedily fixed upon a subject, and setting up his easel and camp-

stool began work on the morning after his arrival. He had been engaged but a few hours when two young ladies came along. They stopped close to him, and Cuthbert, who hated being overlooked when at work, was on the point of growling an anathema under his fair drooping mustache, when one of the girls came close and said quietly—

"How are you, Mr. Hartington? Who would have thought of meeting you here!"

He did not recognize her for a moment and then exclaimed—

"Why, it is Mary Brander. I beg your pardon," he went on, taking off his soft, broad-brimmed hat, "I ought to have said Miss Brander, but having known you so long as Mary Brander, the name slipped out. It must have been three years since we met, and you have shot up from a girl into a full-grown young lady. Are your father and mother here?"

"No, I came down last week to stay with my friend, Miss Treadwyn, who was at Girton with me. Anna, this is Mr. Cuthbert Hartington. Mr. Hartington's place is near Abchester, and he is one of my father's clients."

Miss Treadwyn bowed and Cuthbert took off his hat.

"We have known each other ever since we were children," Mary went on, "that is to say ever since I was a child, for he was a big boy then; he often used to come into our house, while Mr. Hartington was going into business matters with my father, and generally amused himself by teasing me. He used to treat me as if I was a small sort of monkey, and generally ended by putting me in a passion; of course that was in the early days."

"Before you came to years of discretion, Miss Brander. You were growing a very discreet damsel when I last saw you, and I felt rather afraid of you. I know that you were good enough to express much disapproval of me and my ways."

"Very likely I did, though I don't remember it. I think I was very outspoken in those days."

"I do not think you have changed much in that respect, Mary," Miss Treadwyn said.

"Why should one say what one does not think," Mary said,

sturdily, "it would be much better if we all did so. Do you not agree with me, Mr. Hartington?"

"It depends upon what 'better' means; it would be awful to think of the consequences if we all did so. Society would dissolve itself into its component parts and every man's hand would be against his neighbor. I do not say that people should say what they do not think, but I am sure that the world would not be so pleasant as it is by a long way if every one was to say exactly what he did think. Just imagine what the sensation of authors or artists would be if critics were to state their opinions with absolute candor!"

"I think it were better if they did so, Mr. Hartington; in that case there would be fewer idiotic books written and fewer men wasting their lives in trying vainly to produce good paintings."

"That is true enough," Cuthbert laughed, "but you must remember that critics do not buy either books or paintings, and that there are plenty of people who buy the idiotic books and are perfectly content with pictures without a particle of artistic merit."

"I suppose so," she admitted, reluctantly, "but so much the worse, for it causes mediocrity!"

"But we are most of us mediocre—authors like Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot are the exceptions—and so are artists like Millais and Landseer, but when books and paintings give pleasure they fulfil their purpose, don't they?"

"If their purpose is to afford a livelihood to those that make them, I suppose they do, Mr. Hartington; but they do not fulfil what ought to be their purpose—which should, of course, be to elevate the mind or to improve the taste."

He shook his head.

"That is too lofty an ideal altogether for me," he said. "I doubt whether men are much happier for their minds being improved or their tastes elevated, unless they are fortunate enough to have sufficient means to gratify those tastes. If a man is happy and contented with the street he lives in, the house he inhabits, the pictures on his walls, and the books he gets from

a library, is he better off when you teach him that the street is mean and ugly, the house an outrage on architectural taste, the wall-papers revolting, the pictures daubs, and the books trash? Upon my word I don't think so. I am afraid I am a Philistine."

"But you are an artist, are you not, Mr. Hartington," Miss Treadwyn said, looking at the sketch which had already made considerable progress.

"Unfortunately, no; I have a taste for art, but that is all. I should be better off if I had not, for then I should be contented with doing things like this; as it is I am in a perpetual state of grumble because I can do no better."

"You know the Latin proverb *meliora video*, and so on, Mr. Hartington, does it apply?"

"That is the first time I have had Latin quoted against me by a young lady," Cuthbert said, smilingly, but with a slight flush that showed the shaft had gone home. "I will not deny that the quotation exactly hits my case. I can only plead that nature, which gave me the love for art, did not give me the amount of energy and the capacity for hard work that are requisite to its successful cultivation, and has not even given me the stimulus of necessity, which is, I fancy, the greatest human motor."

"I should be quite content to paint as well as you do, Mr. Hartington," Anna Treadwyn said. "It must add immensely to the pleasure of travelling to be able to carry home such remembrances of places one has seen."

"Yes, it does so, Miss Treadwyn. I have done a good deal of wandering about in a small way, and have quite a pile of portfolios by whose aid I can travel over the ground again and recall not only the scenery but almost every incident, however slight, that occurred in connection therewith."

"Well, Anna, I think we had better be continuing our walk."

"I suppose we had. May I ask, Mr. Hartington, where you are staying? I am sure my mother will be very pleased if you will call upon us at Porthalloc. There is a glorious view from the garden. I suppose you will be at work all day, but you are sure to find us in of an evening."

"Yes, I fancy I shall live in the open air as long as there is light enough to sketch by, Miss Treadwyn, but if your mother will be good enough to allow me to waive ceremony, I will come up some evening after dinner; in the meantime may I say that I shall always be found somewhere along the shore, and will be glad to receive with due humility any chidings that my old playmate, if she will allow me to call her so, may choose to bestow upon me."

Anna Treadwyn nodded. "I expect we shall be here every day; the sea is new to Mary, and at present she is wild about it."

"How could you go on so, Mary," she went on, as they continued their walk.

"How could I?" the girl replied. "Have we not agreed that one of the chief objects of women's lives should not only be to raise their own sex to the level of man, but generally to urge men to higher aims, and yet because I have very mildly shown my disapproval of Cuthbert Hartington's laziness and waste of his talents, you ask me how I can do it!"

"Well, you see, Mary, it is one thing for us to form all sorts of resolutions when we were sitting eight or ten of us together in your rooms at Girton; but when it comes to putting them into execution one sees things in rather a different light. I quite agree with our theories and I hope to live up to them, as far as I can, but it seems to me much easier to put the theories into practice in a general way than in individual cases. A clergyman can denounce faults from the pulpit without giving offence to anyone, but if he were to take one of his congregation aside and rebuke him, I don't think the experiment would be successful."

"Nathan said unto David, thou art the man."

"Yes, my dear, but you will excuse my saying that at present you have scarcely attained the position of Nathan."

Mary Brander laughed.

"Well, no, but you see Cuthbert Hartington is not a stranger. I have known him ever since I can remember, and used to like him very much, though he did delight in teasing me; but I have

been angry with him for a long time, and though I had forgotten it, I remember I did tell him my mind last time I saw him. You see his father is a dear old man, quite the beau-ideal of a country squire, and there he is all alone in his big house while his son chooses to live up in London. I have heard my father and mother say over and over again that he ought to be at home taking his place in the county instead of going on his own way, and I have heard other ladies say the same."

"Perhaps mothers with marriageable daughters, Mary," Anna Treadwyn said with a smile, "but I don't really see why you should be so severe on him for going his own way. You are yourself doing so without, I fancy, much deference to your parents' opinions, and besides I have heard you many a time rail against the soullessness of the conversation and the gossip and tittle-tattle of society in country towns, meaning in your case in Abchester, and should, therefore, be the last to blame him for revolting against it."

"You forget, Anna," Mary said, calmly, "that the cases are altogether different. He goes his way with the mere selfish desire to amuse himself. I have set, what I believe to be a great and necessary aim before me. I don't pretend that there is any sacrifice in it, on the contrary it is a source of pleasure and satisfaction to devote myself to the mission of helping my sex to regain its independence, and to take up the position which it has a right to."

"Of course we are both agreed on that, my dear, we only differ in the best way of setting about it."

"I don't suppose Mr. Hartington will take what I said to heart," Mary replied serenely, "and if he does it is a matter of entire indifference to me."

The subject of their conversation certainly showed no signs of taking the matter to heart. He smiled as he resumed his work.

"She is just what she used to be," he said to himself. "She was always terribly in earnest. My father was saying last time I was down that he had learned from Brander that she had taken up all sorts of Utopian notions about women's rights and

so on, and was going to spend two years abroad, to get up her case, I suppose. She has grown very pretty. She was very pretty as a child, though of course last time I saw her she was at the gawky age. She is certainly turning the tables on me, and she hit me hard with that stale old Latin quotation. I must admit it was wonderfully apt. She has a good eye for dress; it is not many girls that can stand those severely plain lines, but they suit her figure and face admirably. I must get her and her friend to sit on a rock and let me put them into the foreground of one of my sketches; funny meeting her here, however, it will be an amusement."

After that it became a regular custom for the two girls to stop as they came along the shore for a chat with Cuthbert, sometimes sitting down on the rocks for an hour; their stay, however, being not unfrequently cut short by Mary getting up with heightened color and going off abruptly. It was Cuthbert's chief amusement to draw her out on her favorite subject, and although over and over again she told herself angrily that she would not discuss it with him, she never could resist falling into the snares Cuthbert laid for her. She would not have minded had he argued seriously with her, but this was just what he did not do, either laughing at her theory, or replying to her arguments with a mock seriousness that irritated her far more than his open laughter.

Anna Treadwyn took little part in the discussions, but sat an amused listener. Mary had been the recognized leader of her set at Girton; her real earnestness and the fact that she intended to go abroad to fit herself the better to carry out her theories, but making her a power among the others. Much as Anna liked and admired her, it amused her greatly to see her entangled in the dilemma, into which Cuthbert led her, occasionally completely posing her by his laughing objections. Of an evening Cuthbert often went up to Porthalloc, where he was warmly welcomed by Anna's mother, whose heart he won by the gentle and deferential manner that rendered him universally popular among the ladies of the families of his artist friends. She would sit smilingly by when the conflicts of the morning

were sometimes renewed, for she saw with satisfaction that Anna at least was certainly impressed with Cuthbert's arguments and banter, and afforded very feeble aid to Mary Brander in her defence of their opinions.

"I feel really obliged to you, Mr. Hartington," she said one evening, when the two girls happened to be both out of the room when he arrived, "for laughing Anna out of some of the ideas she brought back from Girton. At one time these gave me a great deal of concern, for my ideas are old-fashioned, and I consider a woman's mission is to cheer and brighten her husband's home, to be a good wife and a good mother, and to be content with the position God has assigned to her as being her right and proper one. However, I have always hoped and believed that she would grow out of her new-fangled ideas, which I am bound to say she never carried to the extreme that her friend does. The fact that I am somewhat of an invalid and that it is altogether impossible for her to carry out such a plan as Miss Brander has sketched for herself, and that there is no opportunity whatever for her to get up a propaganda in this quiet little Cornish town, has encouraged that hope; she herself has said but little on the subject since she came home, and I think your fights with Miss Brander will go far to complete her cure."

"It is ridiculous from beginning to end," Cuthbert said, "but it is natural enough. It is in just the same way that some young fellows start in life with all sorts of wild radical notions, and settle down in middle age into moderate Liberals, if not into contented Conservatives. The world is good enough in its way and at any rate if it is to get better it will be by gradual progress and not by individual effort. There is much that is very true in Miss Brander's views that things might be better than they are, it is only with her idea that she has a mission to set them right that I quarrel. Earnestness is no doubt a good thing, but too much of it is a misfortune rather than an advantage. No doubt I am prejudiced," he laughed, "because I am afraid that I have no particle of it in my composition. Circumstances have been against its growth, and there is no saying

what I might be if they were to change. At present, at any rate, I have never felt the want of it, but I can admire it among others even though I laugh at it."

A month passed, and Wilson and his two companions moved further along the coast in search of fresh subjects, but Cuthbert declined to accompany them, declaring that he found himself perfectly comfortable where he was, at which his companions all laughed, but made no attempt to persuade him further.

"Do you know, Mary," Anna said, a few days later, "you and Mr. Hartington remind me strongly of Beatrice and Benedict."

"What do you mean, Anna?" Mary asked, indignantly.

"Nothing, my dear," Anna replied, demurely, "except that you are perpetually quarrelling."

"We may be that," Mary said, shortly, "but we certainly shall not arrive at the same kind of conclusion to our quarrel."

"You might do worse, Mary; Mr. Hartington is charming. My mother, who is not given to general admiration, says he is one of the most delightful men that she ever met. He is heir to a good estate, and unless I am greatly mistaken, the idea has occurred to him if not to you. I thought so before, but have been convinced of it since he determined to remain here while those men he was with have all gone away."

"You will make me downright angry with you, Anna, if you talk such nonsense," Mary said, severely. "You know very well that I have always made up mind that nothing shall induce me to marry and give up my freedom, at any rate for a great many years, and then only to a man who will see life as I do, become my co-worker and allow me my independence. Mr. Hartington is the last man I should choose; he has no aim or purpose whatever, and he would ruin my life as well as his own. No, thank you. However, I am convinced that you are altogether mistaken, and Cuthbert Hartington would no more dream of asking me to be his wife than I should of taking him for a husband—the idea is altogether preposterous."

However, a week later, Cuthbert, on going up to Porthalloc one morning, and catching sight of Mary Brander in the

garden by herself, joined her there and astonished her by showing that Anna was not mistaken in her view. He commenced abruptly—

"Do you know, Miss Brander, I have been thinking over your arguments, and I have come to the conclusion that woman has really a mission in life. Its object is not precisely that which you have set yourself, but it is closely allied to it, my view being that her mission is to contribute to the sum of human happiness by making one individual man happy!"

"Do you mean, is it possible that you can mean, that you think woman's mission is to marry?" she asked, with scorn, "are you going back to that?"

"That is entirely what I meant, but it is a particular case I was thinking of, rather than a general one. I was thinking of your case and mine. I do not say that you might not do something towards adding to the happiness of mankind, but mankind are not yearning for it. On the other hand I am sure that you could make me happy, and I am yearning for that kind of happiness."

"Are you really in earnest, Mr. Hartington?"

"Quite in earnest, very much so; in the six weeks that I have been here I have learnt to love you, and to desire, more earnestly certainly than I have ever desired anything before, that you should be my wife. I know that you do not credit me with any great earnestness of purpose, but I am quite earnest in this. I do love you, Mary."

"I am sorry to hear it, and am surprised, really and truly surprised. I thought you disapproved of me altogether, but I did think you gave me credit for being sincere. It is clear you did not, or you could not suppose that I would give up all my plans before even commencing them. I like you very much, Cuthbert, though I disapprove of you as much as I thought you disapproved of me; but if ever I do marry, and I hope I shall never be weak enough to do so, it must be to someone who has the same views of life that I have; but I feel sure that I shall never love anyone if love is really what one reads of in books, where woman is always ready to sacrifice her whole life and her

whole plans to a man who graciously accepts the sacrifice as a matter of course."

"I was afraid that that would be your answer," he said gravely. "And yet I was not disposed to let the chance of happiness go without at least knowing that it was so. I can quite understand that you do not even feel that I am really in earnest. So small did I feel my chances were, that I should have waited for a time before I risked almost certain refusal, had it not been that you are on the point of going abroad for two years. And two years is a long time to wait when one feels that one's chance is very small at the end of that time. Well, it is of no use saying anything more about it. I may as well say good-bye at once, for I shall pack up and go. Good-bye, dear; I hope that you are wrong, and that some day you will make some man worthy of you happy, but when the time comes remember that I prophesy that he will not in the slightest degree resemble the man you picture to yourself now. I think that the saying that extremes meet is truer than those that assert that like meets like; but whoever he is I hope that he will be someone who will make you as happy as I should have tried to do."

"Good-bye, Cuthbert," she said, frankly, "I think this has all been very silly, and I hope that by the time we meet again you will have forgotten all about it."

There was something in his face, as she looked up into it, that told her what she had before doubted somewhat, that he had been really in earnest for once in his life, and she added, "I do hope we shall be quite good friends when we meet again, and that you will then see I am quite right about this."

He smiled, gave her a little nod, and then dropping her hand sauntered into the house.

"It is the most foolish thing I have ever heard of," she said to herself, pettishly, as she looked after him. "I can't think how such an idea ever occurred to him. He must have known that even if I had not determined as I have done to devote myself to our cause, he was the last sort of man I should ever have thought of marrying. Of course he is nice and I always thought

so, but what is niceness when he has no aims, no ambitions in life, and he is content to waste it as he is doing."

Five minutes later Anna Treadwyn joined her in the garden.

"So I was right after all, Mary?"

"How do you know, do you mean to say that he has told you?"

"Not exactly, but one can use one's eyes, I suppose. He said nothing last night about going away, and now he is leaving by this afternoon's coach; besides, although he laughed and talked as usual one could see with half an eye that it was forced. So you have actually refused him?"

"Of course I have, how can you ask such a question? It was the most perfectly absurd idea I ever heard of."

"Well, I hope that you will never be sorry for it, Mary."

"There is not much fear of that," Mary said, with a toss of her head, "and let me say that it is not very polite, either of you or him, to think that I should be ready to give up all my plans in life, the first time I am asked, and that by a gentleman who has not the slightest sympathy with them. It is a very silly and tiresome affair altogether, and I do hope I shall never hear anything of it again."

CHAPTER III.

CUTHBERT HARTINGTON had been back in town but two days when he received a letter from Mr. Brander apprising him of the sudden death of his father. It was a terrible shock, for he had no idea whatever that Mr. Hartington was in any way out of health. Cuthbert had written only the day before to say that he should be down at the end of the week, for indeed he felt unable to settle down to his ordinary course of life in London. He at once sent off a telegram ordering the carriage to meet him by the evening train, and also one to Mr. Brander begging him to be at the house if possible when he arrived.

Upon hearing from the lawyer that his father had been aware

that he might be carried off at any moment by heart disease, but that he had strictly forbidden the doctor and himself writing to him, or informing anyone of the circumstances, he said—

"It is just like my father, but I do wish it had not been so. I might have been down with him for the last three months of his life."

"The Squire went on just in his usual way, Cuthbert. I am sure that he preferred it so. He shrunk, as he said, from knowing that people he met were aware that his days were numbered, and even with me after our first conversation on the subject, he made no allusion whatever to it. He was as cheery and bright as ever, and when I last met him a week ago, even I who knew the circumstances, could see no difference whatever in his manner. I thought he was wrong, at first, but I came to the conclusion afterwards that his decision was not an unwise one. He spared you three months of unavailing pain; he had no fear of death, and was able to go about as before to meet his friends without his health being a subject of discussion, and in all ways to go on as usual until the call came. His death was evidently painless; he sat down in his easy arm-chair after lunch for his usual half-hour's nap, and evidently expired in his sleep. The servant found him, as he believed, still asleep when he came in to tell him that the carriage was at the door, and it was only on touching him he discovered what had happened. They sent the carriage off at once to fetch Dr. Edwards. He looked in at my office and took me over with him, and I got back in time to write to you."

The shock that the Squire's sudden death caused in Abchester, was, a fortnight later, obliterated by the still greater sensation caused by the news that the bank had put up its shutters. The dismay excited thereby was heightened when it became known that the manager had disappeared, and reports got about that the losses of the bank had been enormous. The first investigation into its affairs more than confirmed the worst rumors. For years it had been engaged in propping up the firm not only of Mildrake and Co., which had failed to meet its

engagements on the day preceding the announcement of the bank's failure, but of three others which had broken down immediately afterwards. In all of these firms Mr. Cumming was found to have had a large interest.

On the day after the announcement of the failure of the bank, Mr. Brander drove up to Fairclose. He looked excited and anxious when he went into the room where Cuthbert was sitting, listlessly, with a book before him.

"I have a piece of very bad news to tell you, Mr. Hartington," he said.

"Indeed?" Cuthbert said, without any very great interest in his voice.

"Yes; I daresay you heard yesterday of the failure of the bank?"

"Dr. Edwards looked in here as he was driving past to tell me of it. Had we any money in it?"

"I wish that was all, it is much worse than that, sir. Your father was a shareholder in the bank."

"He never mentioned it to me," Cuthbert said, his air of indifference still unchanged.

"He only bought shares a comparatively short time ago, I think it was after you were here the last time. There were some vague rumors afloat as to the credit of the bank, and your father, who did not believe them, took a few shares as a proof of his confidence in it, thinking, he said, that the fact that he did so might allay any feeling of uneasiness."

"I wonder that you allowed him to invest in bank shares, Mr. Brander."

"Of course I should not have done so if I had had the slightest idea that the bank was in difficulties, but I was in no way behind the scenes. I transacted their legal business for them in the way of drawing up mortgages, investigating titles, and seeing to the purchase and sales of property here in the county; beyond that I knew nothing of their affairs. I was not consulted at all in the matter. Your father simply said to me, 'I see that the shares in the bank have dropped a little, and I hear there are some foolish reports as to its credit; I think as

a county gentleman I ought to support the County Bank, and I wish you to buy say fifty shares for me.'"

"That was just like my father," Cuthbert said, admiringly, "he always thought a great deal of his county, and I can quite understand his acting as he did. Well, they were ten pound shares, I think, so it is only five hundred gone at the worst."

"I am afraid you don't understand the case," Mr. Brander said, gravely; "each and every shareholder is responsible for the debts of the bank to the full extent of his property, and although I earnestly hope that only the bank's capital has been lost, I can't disguise from you that in the event of there being a heavy deficiency it will mean ruin to several of the shareholders."

"That is bad, indeed," Cuthbert said, thoroughly interested now. "Of course you have no idea at present of what the state of the bank is."

"None whatever, but I hope for the best. I am sorry to say I heard a report this morning that Mr. Hislop, who was, as you know, the chairman of the bank, had shot himself, which, if true, will, of course, intensify the feeling of alarm among the shareholders."

Cuthbert sat silent for some time.

"Well," he said, at last, "this is sudden news, but if things are as bad as possible, and Fairclose and all the estate go, I shall be better off than many people. I shall have that five thousand pounds that came to me by my mother's settlement, I suppose?"

"Yes, no doubt. The shares have not been transferred to my name as your father's executor. I had intended when I came up next week to go through the accounts with you, to recommend you to instruct me to dispose of them at once, which I should have done in my capacity of executor without transferring them in the first place to you. Therefore, any claim there may be will lie against the estate and not against you personally."

"That is satisfactory anyhow," Cuthbert said, calmly. "I don't know how I should get on without it. Of course I shall

be sorry to lose this place, but in some respects the loss will be almost a relief to me. A country life is not my vocation, and I have been wondering for the last fortnight what on earth I should do with myself. As it is, I shall, if it comes to the worst, be obliged to work. I never have worked because I never have been forced to do so, but really I don't know that the prospects are altogether unpleasant, and at any rate I am sure that I would rather be obliged to paint for my living than to pass my life in trying to kill time."

The lawyer looked keenly at his client, but he saw that he was really speaking in earnest, and that his indifference at the risk of the loss of his estates was unaffected.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "I am glad indeed that you take it so easily; of course, I hope most sincerely that things may not be anything like so bad as that, and that, at worst, a call of only a few pounds a share will be sufficient to meet any deficiency that may exist, still I am heartily glad to see that you are prepared to meet the event in such a spirit, for to most men the chance of such a calamity would be crushing."

"Possibly I might have felt it more if it had come upon me two or three years later, just as I had got to be reconciled to the change of life, but you see I have so recently and unexpectedly come into the estate that I have not even begun to appreciate the pleasures of possession or to feel that they weigh in the slightest against the necessity of my being obliged to give up the life I have been leading for years. By the bye," he went on, changing the subject carelessly, "how is your daughter getting on in Germany? I happened to meet her at Newquay three weeks ago, and she told me she was going out there in the course of a week or so. I suppose she has gone."

"Yes, she has gone," Mr. Brander said, irritably. "She is just as bent as you were, if you will permit me to say so, on the carrying out of her own scheme of life. It is a great annoyance to her mother and me, but argument has been thrown away upon her, and as unfortunately the girls have each a couple of thousand, left under their own control by their mother's sister, she was in a position to do as she liked. However, I

hope that a year or two will wean her from the ridiculous ideas she has taken up."

"I should doubt whether her cure will be as prompt as you think, it seemed to me that her ideas were somewhat fixed, and it will need a good deal of failure to disillusionize her."

"She is as obstinate as a little mule," Mr. Brander said shortly. "However, I must be going," he went on, rising from his chair. "I drove over directly I had finished my breakfast and must hurry back again to the office. Well, I hope with all my heart, Mr. Hartington, that this most unfortunate affair will not turn out so badly after all."

Cuthbert did not echo the sentiment, but accompanied his visitor silently to the door, and after seeing him off returned to the room, where he reseated himself in his chair, filled and lighted his pipe, put his legs on to another chair, and proceeded to think the matter out.

It was certainly a wholly unexpected change; but at present he did not feel it to be an unpleasant one, but rather a relief. He had for the last ten days been bemoaning himself. While but an heir apparent he could live his own life and take his pleasure as he liked. As owner of Fairclose he had duties to perform—he had his tenants' welfare to look after, there would be the bailiff to interview every morning and to go into all sorts of petty details as to hedges and ditches, fences and repairs, and things he cared not a jot for, interesting as they were to his dear old father. He supposed he should have to go on the Bench and to sit for hours listening to petty cases of theft and drunkenness, varied only by a poaching affray at long intervals.

There would be county gatherings to attend, and he would naturally be expected to hunt and to shoot. It had all seemed to him inexpressedly dreary. Now all that was, if Brander's fears were realized, at an end, even if it should not turn out to be as bad as that, the sum he would be called upon to pay might be sufficient to cripple the estate and to afford him a good and legitimate excuse for shutting up or letting the house, and going away to retrench until the liabilities were all cleared off.

Of course he would have to work in earnest now, but even the thought of that was not altogether unpleasant.

"I believe it is going to be the best thing that ever happened to me," he said to himself. "I know that I should never have done anything if it hadn't been for this, and though I am not fool enough to suppose I am ever going to turn out anything great, I am sure that after a couple of years' hard work I ought to paint decently, and anyhow to turn out as good things as some of those men. It is just what I have always been wanting, though I did not know it. I am afraid I shall have to cut all those dear old fellows, for I should never be able to give myself up to work among them. I should say it would be best for me to go over to Paris; I can start on a fresh groove there. At my age I should not like to go through any of the schools here. I might have three months with Terrier; that would be just the thing to give me a good start; he is a good fellow but one who never earns more than bread and cheese.

"There isn't a man in our set who really knows as much about it as he does. He has gone through our own schools, was a year at Paris, and another at Rome. He has got the whole thing at his fingers' ends, and would make a splendid master if he would but go in for pupils, but with all that he can't paint a picture. He has not a spark of imagination, nor an idea of art; he has no eye for color, or effect. He can paint admirably what he sees, but then he sees nothing but bare facts. He is always hard up, poor fellow, and it would be a real boon to him to take me for three months and stick at it hard with me, and by the end of that time I ought to be able to take my place in some artist's school in Paris without feeling myself to be an absolute duffer among a lot of fellows younger than myself. By Jove, this news is like a breeze on the east coast in summer—a little sharp, perhaps, but splendidly bracing and healthy, just the thing to set a fellow up and make a man of him. I will go out for a walk and take the dogs with me."

He got up, went to the stables, and unchained the dogs, who leapt round him in wild delight, for the time of late had been

as dull for them as for him ; told one of the stable boys to go to the house and say that he would not be back to lunch, and then went for a twenty mile walk over the hills, and returned somewhat tired with the unaccustomed exertion, but with a feeling of buoyancy and light-heartedness such as he had not experienced for a long time past. For the next week he remained at home, and then feeling too restless to do so any longer, went to town, telling Mr. Brander to let him know as soon as the committee, that had already commenced its investigations into the real state of the bank's affairs, made their first report.

The lawyer was much puzzled over Cuthbert's manner. It seemed to him utterly impossible that anyone should really be indifferent to losing a fine estate, and yet he could see no reason for Cuthbert's assuming indifference on so vital a subject unless he felt it. He even discussed the matter with his wife.

"I cannot understand that young Hartington," he said; "most men would have been completely crumpled up at the news I gave him, but he took it as quietly as if it had been a mere bagatelle. The only possible explanation of his indifference that I can think of is that he must have made some low marriage in London, and does not care about introducing his wife to the county ; it is just the sort of thing that a man with his irregular Bohemian habits might do—a pretty model, perhaps, or some peasant girl he has come across when out sketching."

"He never did care particularly about anything," Mrs. Brander said, "and it may be he is really glad to get away from the country."

"That would be possible enough if he had a good income in addition to Fairclose, but all that he will have is that five thousand that came to him from his mother, and I should say he is likely enough to run through that in a couple of years at the outside, and then where will he be ? "

"I can't think, Jeremiah, how you ever permitted his father to do such a mad thing as to take those shares."

"I know what I am doing, my dear, don't you worry yourself about that. You have been wanting me for a very long time to

give up business and go into the country. How would Fairclose suit you?"

"You are not in earnest," she exclaimed, with an excitement very unusual to her. "You can't mean that?"

"I don't often say what I don't mean, my dear, and if Fairclose comes into the market, more unlikely things than that may come to pass; but mind, not a word of this is to be breathed."

"And do you really think it will come into the market?" she asked.

"As certain as the sun will rise to-morrow morning. We only held our first meeting to-day, but that was enough to show us that the directors ought all to be shut up in a lunatic asylum. The affairs of the bank are in a frightful state, simply frightful; it means ruin to every one concerned."

"It is fortunate, indeed, that you did not hold any shares, Jeremiah."

"I was not such a fool," he said, shortly, "as to trust my money in the hands of a body of men who were all no doubt excellent fellows and admirable county gentlemen, but who knew no more of business than babies, and who would be mere tools in the hands of their manager; and I had the excellent excuse that I considered the legal adviser of a bank should have no pecuniary stake whatever in its affairs, but be able to act altogether without bias."

There was an ironical smile on his lips, and his wife said, admiringly—

"How clever you are, Jeremiah."

"It did not require much cleverness for that," he said, with some complacency. "You can reserve your compliments, my dear, until we are established at Fairclose. All I ask is that you won't ask any questions or allude to the matter until it is settled, but leave it entirely in my hands. So far things are working in the right direction."

"Perhaps it will be a good thing for Cuthbert Hartington after all," she said, after sitting for some minutes in silence.

"No doubt it will," he said. "At any rate as he does not

take it to heart in the slightest degree, we need not worry ourselves over him."

"It is funny," she said, "but sometimes the idea has occurred to me that Cuthbert might some day take a fancy to one of our girls, and I might see one of them mistress at Fairclose; but I never dreamt I might be mistress there myself, and I can't guess, even now, how you can think of managing it."

"Don't you trouble to guess, at all, my dear; be content with the plum when it falls into your mouth, and don't worry yourself as to how I manage to shake the tree to bring the fruit down."

Three weeks later it became known definitely that after calling up the remainder of the bank's capital there would be a deficiency of nearly a million, and that every shareholder would be called upon to contribute to the full extent of his ability, to cover the losses. One or two letters from Mr. Brander had already prepared Cuthbert for the final result of the investigation, and he had already begun to carry out the plan he had marked out for himself. He had, as soon as he had returned, astonished his friends by informing them that he found that instead of coming into his father's estates, as he had expected, it was not likely he would ever touch a penny from them, as his father had been a shareholder in the Abchester Bank, and so he believed everything would be swept away.

"Fortunately," he went on, "I have got enough of my own to keep my head above water, and, I dare say you fellows won't believe me, but I mean to go to work in earnest."

The announcement was made to a dozen men who were smoking in Wilson's studio, he having returned the day before from Cornwall.

"Well, youngster, I won't commiserate with you," he growled. "I have been wondering since I heard from King last night what had kept you away, what on earth you would do with yourself now you have come into your money. I often thought it was the worst thing in the world for you that you had not got to work, and if you are really going to set to now, I believe the time will come when you will think that this misfortune is the best thing that ever happened to you."

"I am not quite sure that I do not think so already," Cuthbert replied. "I am not at all disposed to fancy myself a martyr, I can assure you. I mean to go over to Paris and enter an Art School there. I know what you fellows are. You would never let me work."

There was a general chorus of indignation.

"Well, how much do you work yourselves? You potter about for nine months in the year, and work for four or five hours a day for the other three."

"Saul among the prophets!" Wilson exclaimed. "The idea of Cuthbert Hartington rebuking us for laziness is rich indeed," and a roar of laughter showed the general appreciation of the absurdity.

"Never mind," Cuthbert said, loftily. "You will see; 'from morn till dewy eve,' will be my idea of work. It is the way you men loaf, and call it working, that has so far kept me from setting to. Now I am going to burst the bonds of the Castle of Indolence, and when I come back from Paris I shall try to stir you all up to something like activity."

There was another laugh, and then Wilson said, "Well, it is the best thing you can do to go abroad. I don't believe you would ever make a fresh start here."

"I have made fresh a start, Wilson; our respected brother Terrier here, has undertaken to teach me the rudiments, and for the next three months his studio doors will be closed to all visitors from ten to five."

"Is that so? I congratulate you, Cuthbert; that really looks like business, and if Terrier can't teach you how to use the brush and put on color no one can. Gentlemen, we will drink the health of the new boy. Here is to Cuthbert Hartington, and success to him." Glasses were raised and the sentiment heartily echoed.

For three months Cuthbert worked steadily; to his own surprise, not less than to that of his instructor, he found the hours none too long for him. During that time he had received a letter from Mr. Brander that surprised him.

"Dear Mr. Hartington,—In accordance with your instructions

I at once informed the Receiver of the bank that you were prepared to hand over the Fairclose estates for the benefit of the creditors, instead of waiting for the calls to be made, and that you wished the matter to be arranged as speedily as possible as you were shortly going abroad. The necessary deeds will in a few days be prepared. You will doubtless be surprised to hear that I have arranged with the Receiver for the purchase of the estates by private treaty. I have long been intending to retire from business, and have been on the lookout for an estate in the county. I hope this arrangement will not be displeasing to you."

As Mr. Brander had the reputation of being a wealthy man, and his wife's wishes that he should retire from business and purchase an estate in the county were public property, Cuthbert was not surprised, but at the same time he was not altogether pleased. He had never liked the lawyer. He had no particular grounds for not doing so, but he had as a boy an instinctive notion that he was a humbug.

"I wonder," he said to himself, "whether he has all along had an eye to Fairclose, and whether he really did his best to dissuade my father from making that disastrous investment. At any rate, it does not make any difference to me who is there. It might have been some stranger, some manufacturing fellow; I would rather think of Mary being at the old place than a man of that sort. He would have been more likely than Brander to be hard on the tenants, and to have sold off all the things and have turned the place inside out. I don't say that under ordinary circumstances I should choose Brander as a landlord, but he will know well enough that there would be nothing that would do him more harm in the county than a report that he was treating the Squire's tenants harshly. Well, I suppose I had better write him a line saying that I am glad to hear that he has bought the place, as I would naturally prefer that it should be in his hands than those of a stranger."

A fortnight later, Cuthbert, in looking over the "Abchester Guardian," which was sent to him weekly, as the subscription was not yet run out, read the following paragraph: "We under-

stand that our greatly respected townsman, Mr. J. Brander, has purchased the house and estate of Fairclose, which has come into the market owing to the failure of the Abchester Bank, in which the late Mr. Hartington was most unfortunately a shareholder, and which has involved hundreds of families in ruin. The greatest sympathy is everywhere expressed for Mr. Cuthbert Hartington. We understand that the price given by Mr. Brander was £55,000. We believe that we are correct in stating that Mr. Brander was the holder of a mortgage of £15,000 on the estate."

"Mortgage for £15,000," Cuthbert repeated, "impossible. Why should my father have mortgaged the place? He could have no occasion to raise the money. His tastes were most simple, and I am sure that he never lived beyond his income. He paid me a handsome allowance, but, thank God, I never exceeded it. What in the world can this mean! I will write to Brander at once. No, I won't, I will write to the liquidator. If there was such a thing he is certain to have looked into it closely, for it was so much off the sum available for assets."

By return of post Cuthbert received the following letter:

"Dear Mr. Hartington,—In reply to your question I beg to confirm the statement in the newspaper cutting you send to me. Mr. Brander was the holder of a mortgage for £15,000 on your father's estate. I looked into the matter very closely, as it came as a surprise upon us. Everything was in proper order. Mr. Brander's bank-book showed that he drew out £15,000 on the date of the mortgage, and the books of the bank confirm his book. Notice had been given to them a week previously that he would require that sum in notes and gold, and it was so paid over to him. His books also show payment of the interest, and his receipts for the same were found among Mr. Hartington's papers. There was, therefore, no shadow of a doubt possible as to the genuine nature of the mortgage.—Yours truly, W. H. Cox."

Although satisfied that for some reason or other his father had borrowed this sum on mortgage from his lawyer, Cuthbert was no less puzzled than before as to the purpose for which it

had been raised, or what his father could possibly have done with the money. He, therefore, wrote to Mr. Brander, saying that though it was a matter in which he had himself no pecuniary interest, he should be glad if he would inform him of the circumstance which led his father to borrow such a sum.

"I thought," he said, "that I knew everything about my father's money affairs, for he always spoke most openly about them to me, and he never let drop a word as to the mortgage or as to any difficulty in which he had involved himself, or any investment he had thought of making; and I am, therefore, entirely at a loss to understand how he could have required such a sum of money."

The lawyer's answer came in due course.

"My dear Mr. Hartingon,—I was in no way surprised at the receipt of your letter, and indeed have been expecting an inquiry from you as to the mortgage. It happened in this way: Some three years ago your father said to me, 'I want to raise £15,000 on the estate, Brander.' I was naturally greatly surprised, for acting for him as I did, I was, of course, aware that he lived well within his income. He went on, 'Of course you are surprised, Brander, but as you must know well most men have a skeleton in a cupboard somewhere. I have one, and as I am getting on in life I want to bury it for good. It makes no difference to you what it is, and I have no intention of going into the matter. It suffices that I want £15,000.' 'Of course there is no difficulty about that, sir,' I said, 'the estate is unencumbered, and as there is no entail you are free to do with it as you like. 'But I want it done quietly,' he said, 'I don't want it talked about that I have mortgaged Fairclose. The best plan by far would be for you to do it yourself, which I have no doubt you can do easily enough if you like.' I said that I would much rather have nothing to do with it, as I have always considered it a mistake for lawyers to become principals in money transactions with their clients, and had always refused to do anything of the sort. However, he put the matter so strongly that he at last induced me, against my better judgment, to consent to advance the money, and at his earnest request I

handed him the money in notes, so that no one, even at the bank, should be aware that such a sum had passed between us. Of course the mortgage was drawn up in the usual form and duly executed and witnessed, and I have no doubt that the liquidator of the bank will be happy to show you your father's receipt for the money and the receipts given by me to him for the interest. As you say the matter does not pecuniarily affect you now, but at the same time I am naturally anxious you should satisfy yourself thoroughly that the transaction was in every respect a bona fide one."

Cuthbert sat for some time with the letter before him.

"I suppose the dear old dad must have got into some scrape or other years ago," he said to himself. "What it was it is no use wondering, still less inquiring about. I am surprised he never told me, but I suppose he could not wind himself up to the point, and I have no doubt he intended to tell me some day, and would have done so if he hadn't been carried off so suddenly. Anyhow, he knew me well enough to be sure that when I heard of this mortgage, and learned how it had been done that my love and respect for him would be sufficient to prevent my trying to search into his past. He little thought that the mortgage would not affect me to the extent of a penny. Well, there is an end of it, and I won't think any more about the matter—the secret is dead and buried; let it rest there. And now it is time to be off to my work."

CHAPTER IV.

A YEAR later Cuthbert Hartington was sitting in a room, somewhat better furnished than the majority of the students' lodgings, on the second floor of a house in Quartier Latin. The occupant of the room below, Arnold Dampierre, was with him. He was a man three or four years Cuthbert's junior, handsome, grave-eyed, and slightly built; he was a native of Louisiana, and his dark complexion showed a taint of Mulatto blood in his veins.

"So you have made up your mind to stay," he said.

"Certainly, I intend to see it through; in the first place I don't want to break off my work, and as you know am ambitious enough to intend to get a couple of pictures finished in time for the Salon, although whether they will hang there, is another matter altogether."

"Don't pretend to be modest, Cuthbert. You know well enough they will be hung, and more than that, they will be a success. I would wager a hundred dollars to a cent on it, though you haven't as yet settled on the subjects. You know that you are Goudé's favorite pupil and that he predicts great things for you, and there is not one of us who does not agree with him. You know what Goudé said of the last thing you did. 'Gentlemen, I should be proud to be able to sign my name in the corner of this picture, it is admirable.'"

"It was but a little thing," Cuthbert said, carelessly, but nevertheless coloring slightly, "I hope to do much better work in the course of another year." Then he went back to the former subject of conversation.

"Yes, I shall see it through. We have had a good many excitements already—the march away of the troops, and the wild enthusiasm and the shouts of 'À Berlin!' I don't think there was a soul in the crowd who was not convinced that the Germans were going to be crumpled up like a sheet of paper. It was disgusting to hear the bragging in the studio, and they were almost furious with me when I ventured to hint mildly that the Prussians were not fools, and would not have chosen this time to force France into a war if they had not felt that they were much better prepared for it than Napoleon was. Since then it has been just as exciting the other way—the stupor of astonishment, the disappointment and rage as news of each disaster came in; then that awful business at Sedan, the uprising of the scum here, the flight of the Empress, the proclamation of the Republic, and the idiotic idea that seized the Parisians that the Republic was a sort of fetish, and that the mere fact of its establishment would arrest the march of the Germans. Well, now we are going to have a siege, I sup-

pose, and as I have never seen one, it will be interesting. Of course I have no shadow of faith in the chattering newspaper men and lawyers, who have undertaken the government of France; but they say Trochu is a good soldier, and Paris ought to be able to hold out for some time. The mobiles are pouring in, and I think they will fight well, especially the Bretons. Their officers are gentlemen, and though I am sure they would not draw a sword for the Republic, they will fight sturdily for France. I would not miss it for anything. I am not sure that I shan't join one of the volunteer battalions myself."

"You have nothing to do with the quarrel," his companion said.

"No, I have nothing to do with the quarrel; but if I were walking along the streets and saw a big lout pick a quarrel with a weaker one and then proceed to smash him up altogether, I fancy I should take a hand in the business. The Germans deliberately forced on the war. They knew perfectly well that when they put up a German Prince as candidate for the throne of Spain it would bring on a war with France. Why, we ourselves were within an ace of going to war with France when Guizot brought about the Spanish marriage, although it was comparatively of slight importance to us that Spain and France should be united. But to the French this thing was an absolutely vital question, for with Germany and Spain united their very existence would be threatened, and they had nothing for it but to fight, as Germany knew they would have to do."

"But the candidature was withdrawn, Hartington."

"Withdrawn! ay, after the damage was done and France in a flame of indignation. If a man meets me in the street and pulls me by the nose, do you think that if he takes off his hat and bows and says that he withdraws the insult I am going to keep my hands in my pockets? Twice already has France been humiliated and has stood it? Once when Prussia made that secret treaty with Bavaria and Baden, and threw it scornfully in her face; the second time over that Luxembourg affair. Does Germany think that a great nation, jealous of its honor and full of fiery elements, is going to stand being kicked as often as she

chooses to kick her? You may say that France was wrong in going to war when she was really unprepared, and I grant she was unwise, but when a man keeps on insulting you, you don't say to yourself I must go and take lessons in boxing before I fight him. You would hit out straight even if he were twice as big as yourself. That is what I feel about it, Dampierre, and feeling so I fancy that when the thing begins here I shall get too hot over it to help joining in. Ah, here come some of the lads."

There was a clatter of feet on the staircase, and a moment later half a dozen young Frenchmen ran in in a state of wild excitement.

"They have entered Versailles, a party of their horsemen have been seen from Valerian, and a shot has been fired at them. They have fled."

"Well, I should think they naturally would," Cuthbert said. "A handful of horsemen are not likely to remain to be made targets of by the guns of Valerian."

"It is the beginning of the end," one of the students exclaimed. "Paris will assert herself, France will come to her assistance, and the Germans will find that it is one thing to fight against the armies of a despot, and another to stand before a free people in arms."

"I hope so, René, but I own I have considerable doubts of it. A man when he begins to fight, fights because he is there and has got to do it. If he does not kill the enemy he will be killed; if he does not thrash the enemy he will be thrashed; and for the time being the question whether it is by a despot or by a Provisional Government that he is ruled does not matter to him one single jot. As to the Parisians, we shall see. I sincerely hope, they will do all that you expect of them, but in point of fact I would rather have a battalion of trained soldiers than a brigade of untrained peasants or citizens, however full of ardor they may be."

"Ah, you English, it is always discipline, discipline."

"You are quite right, René, that is when it comes to fighting in the open; fighting in the streets of a town is a very different

thing. Then I grant individual pluck will do wonders. Look at Saragosa, look at Lucknow. Civilians in both cases fought as well as the best trained soldiers could do, but in the field discipline is everything. Putting aside the great battles where your feudal lords, with their brave but undisciplined followers, met our disciplined bow and billmen, look at the Jacquerie, the peasants were brave enough, and were animated by hate and despair, but they were scattered like chaff by mere handfuls of knights and men-at-arms. The Swiss have defended their mountains against the armies of despots, because they had mountains to defend, and were accustomed to scaling the rocks, and all good shots, just as the people of a town might hold their streets. I believe that you will hold Paris. I doubt whether the Germans will ever be able to enter your walls, but famine will enter, and, defend yourselves as obstinately as you may, the time must come when food will give out."

"As if we should wait to be starved," another of the students said scoffingly. "If the time comes when there's nothing to eat, we would set Paris on fire and hurl ourselves every man upon the Germans, and fight our way through. Do you think that they could block every road round Paris?"

"I know nothing about military affairs, Leroux, and therefore don't suppose anything one way or the other. I believe the Parisians will make a gallant defence, and they have my heartiest good wishes and sympathy, and when all you men join the ranks my intention is to go with you. But as to the end, my belief is that it will be decided not by Paris but by France."

"Bravo, bravo, Cuthbert," the others exclaimed, "that shows, indeed, that you love France. René said he thought you would shoulder a musket with us, but we said Englishmen only fought either for duty or interest, and we did not see why you should mix yourself up in it."

"Then you are altogether wrong. If you said Englishmen don't fight for what you call glory, you would be right, but you can take my word for it that in spite of what peace-at-any-price people may say, there are no people in the world who are more ready to fight when they think they are right, than Englishmen.

We find it hard enough to get recruits in time of peace, but in time of war we can get any number we want. The regiments chosen to go to the front are delighted, those who have to stay behind are furious. Glory has nothing to do with it. It is just the love of fighting. I don't say that I am thinking of joining one of your volunteer battalions because I want to fight. I do so because I think you are in the right, and that this war has been forced upon you by the Germans, who are likely to inflict horrible sufferings on the city."

"Never mind why you are going to fight," Leroux said, "you are going to fight for us, and that is enough. You are a good comrade. And your friend, here, what is he going to do?"

"I shall join also," Dampierre said. "You are a Republic now, like our own, and of course my sympathies are wholly with you."

"Vive la Republique! Vive l'Americain!" the students shouted.

Cuthbert Hartington shrugged his shoulders.

"We were just starting for a stroll to the walls to see how they are getting on with the work of demolition. Are any of you disposed to go with us?"

They were all disposed, being in so great a state of excitement that anything was better than staying indoors quietly. The streets were full of people, carts were rumbling along, some filled with provisions, others with the furniture and effects of the houses now being pulled down outside the *enciente*, or from the villas and residences at Sèvres Meudon and other suburbs and villages outside the line of defence.

Sometimes they came upon battalions of newly-arrived mobiles, who were loudly cheered by the populace as they marched along; sturdy sunburnt peasants with but little of the bearing of soldiers, but with an earnest serious expression that seemed to say they would do their best against the foes who were the cause of their being torn away from their homes and occupations. Staff officers galloped about at full speed; soldiers of the garrison or of Vinoy's Corps, who had come in a day or two before, lounged about the streets looking in at the shops,

No small proportion of the male population wore kepis, which showed that they belonged either to the National Guard or to the battalions that were springing into existence.

"Why do we not register our names to-day!" René exclaimed.

"Because a day or two will make no difference," Cuthbert replied, "and it is just as well to find out before we do join something about the men in command. Let us above all things choose a corps where they have had the good sense to get hold of two or three army men, who have had experience in war, as their field officers. We don't want to be under a worthy citizen who has been elected solely because he is popular in his quarter, or a demagogue who is chosen because he is a fluent speaker, and has made himself conspicuous by his abuse of Napoleon. This is not the time for tomfoolery; we want men who will keep a tight hand over us, and make us into fair soldiers. It may not be quite agreeable at first, but a corps that shows itself efficient is sure to be chosen when there is work to be done, and will be doing outpost duty, whilst many of the others will be kept within the walls as being of no practical use. Just at present everything is topsy-turvy, but you may be sure that Trochu and Vinoy, and the other generals will gradually get things into shape, and will not be long before they find what corps are to be depended on and what are not."

Crossing the river they made their way out beyond the walls. Even the light-hearted students were sobered by the sight beyond. Thousands of men were engaged on the work of demolition. Where but ten days since stood villas surrounded by gardens and trees, there was now a mere waste of bricks and mortar stretching down to the Forts of Issy and Vanves. The trees had all been felled and for the most part cut up and carried into Paris for firewood. Most of the walls were levelled, and frequent crashes of masonry showed that these last vestiges of bright and happy homes would soon disappear. A continuous stream of carts and foot-passengers came along the road to the gate—the men grim and bitter, the women crying, and all laden

with the most valued of their little belongings. Numbers of cattle and herds of sheep, attended by guards, grazed in the fields beyond the forts.

"By Jove, Dampierre," Cuthbert said, "if I hadn't made up my mind to join a corps before, this scene would decide me. It is pitiful to see all these poor people, who have no more to do with the war than the birds in the air, rendered homeless. A good many of the birds have been rendered homeless too, but fortunately for them it is autumn instead of spring, and they have neither nests nor nestlings to think of, and can fly away to the woods on the slopes below Meudon."

"What a fellow you are, Hartington, to be thinking of the birds when there are tens of thousands of people made miserable."

"I fancy the birds are just as capable of feeling misery as we are," Cuthbert said quietly, "not perhaps over trivial matters, though they do bicker and quarrel a good deal among themselves, but they have their great calamities, and die of thirst, of hunger, and of cold. I remember during a very hard frost some years ago our garden was full of dying birds, though my father had bushels of grain thrown to them every day. It was one of the most painful sights I ever saw, and I know I felt pretty nearly as much cut up at it as I do now. I hate to see dumb animals suffer. There is a sort of uncomplaining misery about them that appeals to one, at any rate appeals to me, infinitely. These poor fellows are suffering too, you will say. Yes, but they have their consolation. They promise themselves that as soon as they get into Paris they will join a corps and take vengeance on those who have hurt them. They may think, and perhaps with reason, that when the trouble is over, they will find their cottages still standing, and will take up life again as they left it. They have at least the consolation of swearing, a consolation which, as far as I know, is denied to animals and birds."

"You are a rum fellow, Hartington, and I never know when you are in earnest and when you are not."

"Let us go back," René Caillard, who, with the others, had

been standing silently, said abruptly. "This is too painful; I feel suffocated to think that such a humiliation should fall on Paris. Surely all civilized Europe will rise and cry out against this desecration." He turned and with his comrades walked back towards the gate. Cuthbert followed with Arnold Dampierre.

"That is just the way with them," the former said, "it would have been no desecration had they encamped before Berlin, but now, because it is the other way, they almost expect a miracle from Heaven to interpose in their favor. Curious people the French. Their belief in themselves is firm and unshakable, and whatever happens it is the fault of others, and not of themselves. Now, in point of fact, from all we hear, the Germans are conducting the war in a very much more humane and civilized way than the French would have done if they had been the invaders, and yet they treat their misfortunes as if high Heaven had never witnessed such calamities. Why, the march of the Germans has been a peaceful procession in comparison with Sherman's march or Sheridan's forays. They have sacked no city, their path is not marked by havoc and conflagration; they fight our men, and maybe loot deserted houses, but as a rule unarmed citizens and peasants have little to complain of."

"That is true enough," the other agreed reluctantly.

"My opinion is," Cuthbert went on, "that all these poor people who are flocking into Paris are making a hideous mistake. If they stopped in their villages the betting is that no harm would have come to them; whereas now they have left their homes unguarded and untenanted—and it would not be human nature if the Germans did not occupy them—while in Paris they will have to go through all the privations and hardships of a siege and perhaps of a bombardment; besides there are so many more hungry mouths to feed. In my opinion Trochu and the Provisional Government would have acted very much more wisely had they issued an order that no strangers, save those whose houses have been destroyed, should be allowed to enter the city, and advising the inhabitants of all the villages round either to remain quietly in their homes, or to retire to places at

a distance. Fighting men might, of course, come in, but all useless mouths will only hasten the date when famine will force the city to surrender."

"You seem very sure that it will surrender sooner or later, Hartington," Dampierre said, irritably. "My opinion is that all France will rise and come to her rescue."

"If Bazaine cuts his way out of Metz they may do it, but we have heard nothing of his moving, and the longer he stays the more difficulty he will have of getting out. He has a fine army with him, but if he once gives time to the Germans to erect batteries commanding every road out of the place, he will soon find it well-nigh impossible to make a sortie. Except that army France has nothing she can really rely upon. It is all very well to talk of a general rising, but you can't create an army in the twinkling of an eye; and a host of half-disciplined peasants, however numerous, would have no chance against an enemy who have shown themselves capable of defeating the whole of the trained armies of France. No, no, Dampierre, you must make up your mind beforehand that you are going in on the losing side. Paris may hold out long enough to secure reasonable terms, but I fancy that is about all that will come of it."

The other did not reply. He had something of the unreasoning faith that pervaded France, that a Republic was invincible, and that France would finally emerge from the struggle victorious.

"We shall try and find out to-night about the corps," René Caillard said, as the others overtook them some distance inside the gates. "After what we have seen to-day we are all determined to join without delay. I heard last night from some men at Veillant's that they and a good many others have put their names down for a corps that is to be called the Chasseurs des Écoles. They said they understood that it was to be composed entirely of students. Not all art, of course, but law and other schools."

"That would be just the thing," Cuthbert said, "if they can only get some good officers. One likes the men one has to

work with to be a little of one's own class. Well, if the officers are all right you can put my name down. I suppose there is no occasion for me to go myself."

"Of course there is occasion, lazy one. You have to be sworn in."

Cuthbert nodded. "I suppose we shan't have to give up work altogether?"

"I should think not," René said. "I suppose we shall have two or three hours' drill in the morning and nothing more till the time for action comes. Of course the troops and the mobiles will do the work at the forts and walls, and we shall be only called out if the Prussians venture to attack us, or if we march out to attack them."

"So much the better. I came here to work, and I want to stick to it and not waste my time in parades and sentry duty. Well, we shall meet at the studio in the morning and you can give us your news then."

Some fifteen young men met on the following morning at Goudé's studio.

"Now, gentlemen," said the artist, a short man, with a large head, and an abundant crop of yellow hair falling on to his shoulders, "please to attend to business while you are here. Paint—you have plenty of time outside to discuss affairs."

M. Goudé was an artist of considerable talent, but of peppery temper. He had at one time gone to war with the Hanging Committee of the Salon because one of his paintings had been so badly hung that he declared it to be nothing short of an insult, and had forthwith proceeded to publish the most violent strictures upon them. The result was that on the following year his pictures were not hung at all, whereupon, after another onslaught upon them, he had declared his determination never again to submit a picture to the judgment of men whose natural stupidity was only equalled by their ignorance of art.

This vow he had for eight years adhered to, only occasionally painting a picture and selling it privately, but devoting himself almost entirely to the studio he had opened, when he ceased

exhibiting. He was an admirable teacher and his list of pupils was always full. He was an exacting master and would take none but students who showed marked ability. As a preliminary a picture had to be presented to him for examination, and at least three out of four of the canvases sufficed to ensure their authors' prompt rejection.

It was, therefore, considered an honor to be one of Goudé's pupils, but it had its drawbacks. His criticisms were severe and bitter; and he fell into violent passions when, as Leroux once observed, he looked like the yellow dwarf in a rage. Cuthbert had heard of him from Terrier, who said that Goudé had the reputation of being by far the best master in Paris. He had presented himself to him as soon as he arrived there; his reception had not been favorable.

"It is useless, Monsieur," the master had said, abruptly, "there are two objections. In the first place you are too old, in the second place you are a foreigner, and I do not care to teach foreigners. I never had but one here, and I do not want another. He was a Scotchman, and because I told him one day when he had produced an atrocious daub, that he was an imbecile pig, he seized me and shook me till my teeth chattered in my head, and then kicked over the easel and went out."

"You may call me an imbecile pig if you like," Cuthbert said with his quiet smile, "it would hurt me in no way. I have come over to learn, and I am told you are the best master in Paris. When a man is a great master he must be permitted to have his peculiarities, and if he likes to treat grown-up men as children, of course he can do so, for are we not children in art by his side."

Monsieur Goudé was mollified, but he did not show it.

"Have you brought any canvases with you?"

"I have brought the last two things I did before leaving London."

"Well, you can bring them if you like," the master said, ungraciously, "but I warn you it will be useless. You English cannot paint, even the best of you. You have no soul, you are monotonous, but you may bring them."

An hour later Cuthbert returned to the studio, which was now occupied by the students.

"You are prompt," the master said, looking round from the student whose work he was correcting with no small amount of grumbling and objurgation. "Put your things on those two spare easels, I will look at them presently."

Seeing that several of the other students were smoking, Cuthbert filled and lighted his pipe, calmly placed the pictures on the easels without taking off the cloths in which they were wrapped, and then put his hands into the pockets of his velvet jacket and looked round the room. After his experience of some of the luxuriously arranged studios at St. John's Wood, the room looked bare and desolate. There was no carpet and not a single chair or lounge of any description. Some fifteen young fellows were painting. All wore workmen's blouses. All had mustaches, and most of them had long hair. They appeared intent on their work, but smiles and winks were furtively exchanged, and the careless nonchalance of this tall young Englishman evidently amused them. In four or five minutes M. Goudé turned round and walked towards the easels. Cuthbert stepped to them and removed the cloths. The master stopped abruptly, looked at them without speaking for a minute or two, then walked up and closely examined them.

"They are entirely your own work?" he asked.

"Certainly, I did not show either of them to my master until I had finished them."

They were companion pictures. The one was a girl standing in a veranda covered with a grapevine, through which bright rays of sunshine shone, one of them falling full on her face. She was evidently listening, and there was a look of joyous expectancy in her face. Underneath, on the margin of the canvas, was written in charcoal, "Hope." The other represented the same figure, darkly dressed, with a wan, hopeless look in her face, standing on a rock at the edge of an angry sea, over which she was gazing; while the sky overhead was dark and sombre without a rift in the hurrying clouds. It was labelled "Despair."

For two or three minutes longer M. Goudé looked silently at the pictures and then turning suddenly called out, "Attention, gentlemen. Regard these pictures, they are the work of this gentleman who desires to enter my studio. In the eight years I have been teaching I have had over two hundred canvases submitted to me, but not one like these. I need not say that I shall be glad to receive him. He has been well taught. His technique is good and he has genius. Gentlemen, I have the honor to present to you Monsieur Cuthbert Hartington, who is henceforth one of you."

The students crowded round the pictures with exclamations of surprise and admiration. It was not until M. Goudé said sharply "to work," that they returned to their easels.

"You will find canvases in that cupboard if you like to set at work at once. Choose your own size and subject and sketch it out in chalk. I should like to see how you work. Ah, you have a portfolio. I will look through your sketches this afternoon if you will leave it here."

Cuthbert chose a canvas from a pile ready stretched, selected a sketch from his portfolio of a wayside inn in Normandy, pinned it on the easel above the canvas, and then began to work. M. Goudé did not come near him until the work was finished for the morning, then he examined what he had just done.

"You work rapidly," he said, "and your eye is good. You preserve the exact proportions of the sketch, which is excellent, though it was evidently done hastily, and unless I mistake was taken before you had begun really to paint. You did not know how to use color, though the effect is surprisingly good, considering your want of method at the time. I will look through your portfolio while I am having my lunch. In an hour we resume work." So saying he took up the portfolio and left the room. The students now came up to Cuthbert and introduced themselves one by one.

"You see our master in his best mood to-day," one said. "I never have seen him so gracious, but no wonder. Now we have no ceremony here. I am René, and this is Pierre, and this Jean, and you will be Cuthbert."

"It is our custom in England," Cuthbert said, "that a new boy always pays his footing; so gentlemen, I hope you will sup with me this evening. I am a stranger and know nothing of Paris; at any rate nothing of your quarter, so I must ask two of you to act as a committee with me, and to tell me where we can get a good supper and enjoy ourselves."

From that time Cuthbert had been one of the brotherhood and shared in all their amusements, entering into them with a gayety and heartiness that charmed them and caused them to exclaim frequently that he could not be an Englishman, and that his accent was but assumed. Arnold Dampierre had been admitted two months later. He had, the master said, distinct talent, but his work was fitful and uncertain. Some days he would work earnestly and steadily, but more often he was listless and indolent, exciting M. Goudé's wrath to fever heat.

Among the students he was by no means a favorite. He did not seem to understand a joke, and several times blazed out so passionately that Cuthbert had much trouble in soothing matters down, explaining to the angry students that Dampierre was of hot southern blood and that his words must not be taken seriously. Americans, he said, especially in the south, had no idea of what the English call chaff, and he begged them as a personal favor to abstain from joking with him, or it would only lead to trouble in the studio.

CHAPTER V.

THERE was no more talk after the master had given the order for work. Most of the easels were shifted round and fresh positions taken up, then there was a little pause.

"She is late," M. Goudé said, with an impatient stamp of the foot. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the door opened and a girl entered.

"Good-morning, messieurs," and she made a sweeping courtesy.

"You are five minutes late, Minette."

"Ma foi, master, what would you have with the Prussians in sight and all Paris in the streets—five minutes mean neither here nor there. I expected praise for having come at all."

"There, there," the artist said hastily, "run into your closet and change, we are all waiting."

She walked across the room to a door in the corner, with an expression of careless defiance in her face, and reappeared in five minutes in the dress of a Mexican peasant girl attired for a fête. The dress suited her admirably. She was rather above the middle height, her figure lithe and supple with exceptionally graceful curves; her head was admirably poised on her neck. Her hair was very dark, and her complexion Spanish rather than French. Her father was from Marseilles and her mother from Arles.

Minette was considered the best model in Paris, and M. Goudé had the merit of having discovered her. Three years before, when passing through a street inhabited by the poorer class of workmen in Montmartre, he had seen her leaning carelessly against a doorway. He was struck with the easy grace of her pose. He walked up the street and then returned. As he did so he saw her spring out and encounter an older woman, and at once enter upon a fierce altercation with her. It was carried on with all the accompaniment of southern gesture and ceased as suddenly as it began; the girl, with a gesture of scorn and contempt turning and walking back to the post she had left with a mien as haughty as that of a Queen dismissing an insolent subject.

"That girl would be worth a fortune as a model," the artist muttered. "I must secure her; her action and gesture are superb." He walked up to her, lifted his broad hat, and said "Mademoiselle, I am an artist. My name is Goudé. I have an academy for painting, and I need a model. The work is not hard, it is but to sit or stand for two or three hours of a morning, and the remuneration I should offer would be five francs a day for this. Have I your permission to speak to your parents?"

There was an angry glitter in her eye—a change in her pose

that, slight as it was, reminded the artist of a cat about to spring.

"A model for a painter, monsieur? Is it that you dare to propose that I shall sit without clothes to be stared at by young men? I have heard of such things. Is this what monsieur wishes?"

"Not at all, not at all," Mr. Goudé said hastily. "Mademoiselle would always be dressed. She would be sometimes a Roman lady, sometimes a Spanish peasant, a Moorish girl, a Breton, or other maiden. You would always be free to refuse any costume that you considered unsuitable."

Her expression changed again. "If that is all, I might do it," she said; "it is an easy way of earning money. How often would you want me?"

"I should say three times a week, and on the other three days you would have no difficulty in obtaining similar work among artists of my own acquaintance. Here is my card and address."

The girl took it carelessly.

"I will speak to my father about it this evening when he comes home from work. You are quite sure that I shall not have to undress at all?"

"I have assured mademoiselle already that nothing of the sort will be required of her. There are models indeed who pose for figure, but these are a class apart, and I can assure mademoiselle that her feelings of delicacy will be absolutely respected."

The next day Minette Dufaure appeared at the studio and had ever since sat for all the female figures required. The air of disdain and defiance she had first shown soon passed away, and she entered with zest and eagerness upon her work. She delighted in being prettily and becomingly dressed. She listened intelligently to the master's descriptions of the characters that she was to assume, and delighted him with the readiness with which she assumed suitable poses, and the steadiness with which she maintained them.

There was nothing of the stiffness of the model in her atti-

tudes. They had the charm of being unstudied and natural, and whether as a bacchanal, a peasant girl, or a Gaulish amazon, she looked the part equally well; her face was singularly mobile, and although this was an inferior consideration to the master, she never failed to represent the expression appropriate to the character she assumed.

Her reputation was soon established among the artists who occasionally dropped into Goudé's studio, and her spare time was fully occupied, and that at much higher rates of pay than those she earned with him. After the first two or three months she came but twice a week there, as that amply sufficed for the needs of the studio. On his telling her that he should no longer require her to come three times a week, as his pupils had other things to learn besides drawing the female figure, the master said—

"I must pay you higher in future, Minette. I know that my friends are paying you five francs an hour."

"A bargain is a bargain," she said. "You came to me first, and but for you I should never have earned a penny. Now we have moved into a better street and have comfortable lodgings. We have everything we want, and I am laying by money fast. You have always treated me well, and I like you though your temper is even worse than my father's. I shall keep to my agreement as long as you keep to yours, and if you do not I shall not come here at all."

With the students Minette was a great favorite. In the pause of five minutes every half-hour to allow her to change her position, she chatted and laughed with them with the frankest good temper, more than holding her own in the sallies of chaff. When they occasionally made excursions in a body into the country to sketch and paint, she was always of the party, going in the capacity of comrade instead of that of a model, contributing a full share to the lunch basket, but ready to pose as a peasant girl with a fagot on her head, a gleaner, or a country-woman with a baby on her lap, according to the scene and requirements. It was a matter of course that Minette should be present at every supper party or little fête

among the students, always being placed in the seat of honor at the head of the table, and joining in all the fun of those merry reunions. For a time she treated all alike as comrades, and accepted no compliments save those so extravagant as to provoke general laughter. Gradually, however, it came to be understood among the students that Minette made an exception in the case of Arnold Dampierre, and that on occasions when they happened to break up in pairs he was generally by her side.

"One never can tell what women will do," René Caillard said one evening, when five or six of them were sitting smoking together. "Now, Minette might have the pick of us."

"No, no, René," one of the others protested, "most of us are suited already."

"Well, several of us, then. I am at present unattached, and so are André, and Pierre, and Jean; so is Cuthbert. Now, putting us aside, no woman in her senses could hesitate between the Englishman and Dampierre. He has a better figure, is stronger and better looking. He is cleverer, and is as good-tempered as the American is bad; and yet she takes a fancy for Dampierre, and treats all the rest of us, including the Englishman, as if we were boys."

"I fancy women like deference," Pierre Leroux said. "She is a good comrade with us all, she laughs and jokes with us as if she were one of ourselves. Now the American very seldom laughs and never jokes. He treats her as if she were a duchess and takes her altogether seriously. I believe he would be capable of marrying her."

The others all burst into a laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" Cuthbert asked, as he entered the room at the moment.

"Pierre is just saying that he thinks the American is capable of marrying Minette."

"I hope not," Cuthbert said, more seriously than he generally spoke. "Minette is altogether charming as she is. She is full of fun and life; she is clever and sparkling. There is no doubt that in her style she is very pretty. As to her grace

it needs no saying. I think she is an honest good girl, but the idea of marrying her would frighten me. We see the surface and it is a very pleasant one, but it is only the surface. Do you think a woman could look as she does in some of her poses and not feel it? We have never seen her in a passion, but if she got into one, it would be terrible. When she flashes out sometimes it is like a tongue of flame from a slumbering volcano. You would feel that there might be an eruption that would sweep everything before it. As you know, I gave up painting her after the first two months, but I sketch her in every pose; not always her whole figure, but her face, and keep the sketches for use some day. I was looking through them only yesterday and I said to myself, 'this woman is capable of anything.' She might be a Joan of Arc, or Lucraetzia Borghia. She is a puzzle to me altogether. Put her in a quiet, happy home and she might turn out one of the best of women. Let her be thrown into turbulent times and she might become a demon of mischief. At present she is altogether undeveloped. She is two and twenty in years, but a child, or rather a piquant, amusing young girl, in manner, and perhaps in disposition. She is an enigma of which I should be sorry to have to undertake the solution. As she seems, I like her immensely, but when I try to fathom what she really is, she frightens me."

The others laughed.

"Poor little Minette," Pierre Leroux said. "You are too hard upon her altogether, Cuthbert. The girl is a born actress and would make her fortune on the stage. She can represent, by the instinct of art, passions which she has never felt. She can be simple and majestic, a laughing girl and a furious woman, a Christian martyr and a bacchanal, simply because she has mobile features, intelligence, sentiment, emotion, and a woman's instinct, that is all. She is a jolly little girl, and the only fault I have to find with her is that she has the bad taste to prefer that gloomy American to me."

"Well, I hope you are right, Pierre, though I hold my own opinion unchanged—at any rate I sincerely trust that Dampierre will not make a fool of himself with her. You men do

not like him because you don't understand him. You are gay and light-hearted, you take life as it comes. You form connections easily and lightly, and break them off again a few months later just as easily. Dampierre takes life earnestly. He is indolent, but that is a matter of race and blood. He would not do a dishonorable action to save his life. I believe he is the heir to a large fortune, and he can, therefore, afford to work at his art in a dilettante sort of manner, and not like us poor beggars who look forward to earning our livelihood by it. He is passionate, I grant, but that is the effect of his bringing up on a plantation in Louisiana, surrounded by his father's slaves, for though they are now free by law the nature of the negro is unchanged, and servitude is his natural position. The little white master is treated like a god, every whim is humored, and there being no restraining hand upon him, it would be strange if he did not become hasty and somewhat arrogant.

"Not that there is any arrogance about Dampierre—he is unaffected and simple in his tastes, except in the matter of his lodgings. I question if there is one of us who spends less than he does, but he no more understands you than you understand him; he takes your badinage seriously, and cannot understand that it is harmless fun. However, he is better in that respect than when he first came over, and in time, no doubt, his touchiness will die out. God forbid that he should ever spoil his life by such a hideous mistake as marrying Minette. Except on the principle that people are always attracted by their opposites, I can't account for his infatuation for this girl, or for her taking up with him. He has never alluded to the subject to me. I don't know that her name has ever been mentioned between us. I agree with you that I think he is in earnest about her, but my conclusion is certainly not formed on anything he has ever said himself. I have often thought that a good deal of his irritability arises from his annoyance at her fun and easy way with us all. He never comes to any of our little meetings. If he is really in earnest about her, I can understand that it would be a terrible annoyance to him to see her taking a lead in such meetings and associating so freely with your, let us say,

temporary wives. I have seen him on some of our sketching excursions walk away, unable to contain his anger when you have all been laughing and joking with her."

"I consider that to be an insolence," René said hotly.

"No, no, René, imagine yourself five years older, and making a fortune rapidly by your art, in love with some girl whom you hope to make your wife. I ask you whether you would like to see her laughing and chatting *en bonne camarade* with a lot of wild young students. Still less, if you can imagine such a thing, joining heart and soul in the fun of one of their supper parties. You would not like it, would you?"

"No," René admitted frankly. "I own I shouldn't. Of course, I cannot even fancy such a thing occurring, but if it did I can answer for it that I should not be able to keep my temper. I think now that you put it so, we shall be able to make more allowances for the American in future."

To this the others all agreed, and henceforth the tension that had not unfrequently existed between Dampierre and his fellow-students was sensibly relaxed.

"You were not here last week, Minette," M. Goudé said, as he went up on to the platform at the end of the room to arrange her pose.

"I did not think that you would expect me, master," she said, "but even if you had I could not have come. Do you think that one could stand still like a statue for hours when great things were being done, when the people were getting their liberty again, and the flag of the despot was being pulled down from the Tuileries. I have blood in my veins, master, not ice."

"Bah!" M. Goudé exclaimed. "What difference does it make to you, or to anyone as far as I see, whether the taxes are levied in the name of an Emperor or of a Republic? Do you think a Republic is going to feed you any better and reduce your rents, or to permit Belleville and Montmartre to become masters of Paris? In a short time they will grumble at the Republic just as they grumble at the Emperor. It is folly and madness. The Emperor is nothing to me, the Government is

nothing to me. I have to pay my taxes—they are necessary—for the army has to be kept up and the Government paid; beyond that I do not care a puff of my pipe what Government may call itself."

"You will see what you will see," said the girl, sententiously.

"I dare say, Minette, as long as I have eyes I shall do that. Now don't waste any more time."

"What am I to be, master?"

"A Spanish peasant girl dancing; hold these slips of wood in your hand, they are supposed to be castanets; now just imagine that music is playing and that you are keeping time to it with them, and swaying your body, rather than moving your feet to the music."

After two or three changes she struck an attitude that satisfied the master.

"That will do, Minette, stand as you are; you cannot improve that. Now, gentlemen, to work."

She was standing with one foot advanced, as if in the act of springing on to it; one of her arms was held above her head, the other advanced across her body; her head was thrown back, and her balance perfect.

Cuthbert looked up from his work, took out a note-book, and rapidly sketched the figure; and then, putting his book into his pocket again, returned to his work, the subject of which was a party of Breton mobiles, with stacked arms under some trees in the Champs Elysée. He had taken the sketch two days before and was now transferring it on to canvas.

"I should not be surprised," he thought to himself, "if the girl is right, and if there is not serious trouble brewing in the slums of Paris.

"As soon as these fellows find out that they are no better off for the change, and that a Republic does not mean beer and skittles, or, as they would like, unlimited absinthe and public workshops, with short hours and high pay, they will begin to get savage, and then there will be trouble. The worst of it is one can never rely upon the troops, and discipline is certainly

more relaxed than usual now that the Emperor has been upset, and every Jack thinks himself as good as his master. Altogether I think we are likely to have lively times here before long. I am not sure that the enemies within are not likely to prove as great a danger to Paris as the foe without. It was a happy idea of mine to come to Paris, and I am likely to get subjects enough to last for a life-time, though I don't know that battle scenes are altogether in my line. It does not seem to me that I have any line in particular yet. It is a nuisance having to decide on that, because I have heard Wilson say an artist, like a writer, must have a line, and when he has once taken it up he must stick to it. If a man once paints sea pieces the public look to get sea pieces from him, and won't take anything else. It is the same thing if he accustoms them to Eastern, or Spanish, or any other line.

"It may be that this war will decide the matter for me, which will be a comfort and relief, though I doubt if I shall ever be able to stick in one groove. Goudé said only yesterday that I had better go on working at both figure and landscape. At present he could not give an opinion as to which I was likely to succeed in best, but that he rather fancied that scenes of life and action, combined with good backgrounds, were my forte, and battle scenes would certainly seem to come under that category."

After work was over Cuthbert went out by himself and spent the afternoon in sketching. He was engaged on a group of soldiers listening to one of their number reading a bulletin of the latest news, when his eye fell on a young lady walking with a brisk step towards him. He started, then closed his note-book suddenly, and as she was on the point of passing, turned to her and held out his hand.

"Have you dropped from the skies, Miss Brander?"

There was surprise, but neither embarrassment nor emotion on her face as she said, frankly—

"Why, Cuthbert Hartington, this is a curious meeting. I did know you were in Paris, for I had heard as much from my father, but I had no idea of your address and I have wondered many times since I came here, five weeks ago, whether we should run

against each other. No, I have not dropped from the clouds, and you ought to have known I should be here; I told you that I was going to have a year in Germany and then a year in France. My year in Germany was up two months ago. I went home for a fortnight, and here I am as a matter of course."

"I might have known you would carry out your programme exactly as you had sketched it, but I thought that the disturbed state of things over here might have induced you to defer that part of the plan until a more appropriate season. Surely Paris is not just at present a pleasant abode for a young lady, and is likely to be a much more unpleasant one later on."

"I think there could hardly be a more appropriate time for being here, Mr. Hartington; one could have no better time for studying social problems than the present when conventionalities have gone to the winds and one sees people as they are; but this is hardly the place to talk. I am boarding with a family at No. 15 Avenue de Passy. Will you come and see me there?"

"Certainly I will, if you will allow me. What will be a convenient time?"

"I should say three o'clock in the afternoon. They are all out then, except Madame Michaud and her little daughter, and we shall be able to chat comfortably, which we could not do if you came in the evening, when the father is at home and two boys who are away at school during the day. Will you come to-morrow?"

"Yes, my afternoons are free at present."

She held out her hand and then walked away with a steady business-like step. Cuthbert stood watching her till she had disappeared in the crowd.

"She has no more sentiment in her composition at present," he said to himself with a laugh that had some bitterness in it, "than a nether millstone. Her mind is so wrapped up in this confounded fad of hers that there is no room in it for anything else. I might have been a cousin, instead of a man she had refused, for any embarrassment or awkwardness she felt at our sudden meeting. It clearly made no impression at all upon her. She remembers, of course, that she met me at Newquay. I don't

suppose she has really forgotten that I asked her to be my wife, but it was a mere incident, and affected her no more than if I had asked her to buy a picture and she had refused. I wish to goodness I had not met her again. I had got fairly over it, and was even beginning to wonder how I ever could have wanted to marry anyone so different in every way from the sort of woman I fancied I should have fallen in love with. How foolish of her coming over to Paris at this time. Well, I daresay it has all saved a lot of trouble. I suppose at that time Brander would have been delighted at the prospect, but it would have been a very different thing after the failure of the bank. I don't think he would have made a pleasant father-in-law under the present circumstances. He is an old fox. I always thought so, and I think so more than ever now. It has been a queer affair altogether. I wonder what Mary thinks of it all. I suppose she will talk to me about it to-morrow afternoon. By the way, I have to go this evening with René and the others to be sworn in or attested, or whatever they call it, at the Mairie. Their report as to the officers is satisfactory. I have heard that Longfranc was an excellent officer before he came into some money, cut the army and took up art. I have no doubt he will make a good major, and he understands the men better than most army men would do. They say the Colonel is a good man, too, and was very popular with his regiment before he retired from the service."

CHAPTER VI.

On inquiry of the concierge at No. 15 Avenue de Passy, Cuthbert was informed that Madame Michaud lived on the third floor. On ascending and ringing the bell the door was opened by an elderly servant.

"I have called to see Mademoiselle Brander, is she at home?"

"She is, sir."

"Would you give her my card, if you please?"

"Mademoiselle is expecting you," the servant said, and led the way at once into a sitting-room.

It was of the usual type of such room—of good size but bare, with bee's-waxed flooring, plainly frescoed walls, and a ceiling colored gray and bordered with painted arabesques. Two or three small rugs relieved the bareness of the floor. An oval table on very thin legs stood in the middle; the chairs and couch seemed to have been made to match it, and had an eminently bare and uncomfortable appearance; a vase of flowers stood on a spindle-legged little table in front of one of the windows which opened down to the ground. Some colored prints in frames of stained wood hung on the walls, and some skimpy curtains draped the windows.

Mary Brander was seated with a writing-pad on her knee at the window unoccupied by the vase and its support. She put the writing-pad and a book, evidently a large diary, down on the floor.

"You are punctual to the minute, Mr. Hartington. I should never have credited you with that virtue."

"Nor with any other virtue, I imagine, Miss Brander," he said, with a smile.

"Oh, yes, I do. I credit you with numbers of them. Now draw that chair up to the window—it is not comfortable, but it is the best of them—and let us talk. Now, in the first place you don't know how sorry, how dreadfully sorry I have been about what has happened at home. I was shocked, indeed, at the news of the sudden death of your dear father. He was always so kind when he came to see us, and I liked him so much, I felt for you deeply. It must have been an awful shock for you. I heard it a few days after I got to Dresden. Then came the other news about that terrible failure and its consequences. It seemed too shocking altogether that you should have lost the dear old place, but I do think I was most shocked of all when I heard that my father had bought it. Somehow it did not seem to be right. Of course it must have been, but it did not seem so to me. Did it to you, Cuthbert?" and she looked at him wistfully.

"I have no doubt it was all right," he said, "and as it was to be sold, I think I preferred it should be to your father rather than anybody else. I believe I rather liked the thought that as it was not to be my home it would be yours."

She shook her head.

"It does not seem to me to be natural at all, and I was miserable all the time I was there the other day."

"Your father respected my wishes in all respects, Mary. I believe he kept on all the old servants who chose to stay. He promised me that he would not sell my father's hunters, and that no one should ride them, but that they should be pensioners as long as they lived; and the same with the dogs, and that at any time, if I moved into quarters where I could keep a dog or two, he would send up my two favorites to me."

"Yes, they are all there. I went out and gave cakes to the dogs and sugar to the horses every day, and talked to them, and I think regularly had a cry over them. It was very foolish, but I could not help it. It did all seem so wrong and so pitiful. I could not learn much about you from father. He said that you had only written once to him on business since things were finally settled; but that you had mentioned that you were going to Paris, and he said, too—" and she hesitated for a moment, "that although you had lost Fairclose and all the property, you had enough to live upon in a way—a very poor way—but still enough for that."

"Not such a very poor way," he said. "There is no secret about it. I had five thousand pounds that had been settled on my mother, and fortunately that was not affected by the smash, so I have two hundred a year, which is amply sufficient for my wants."

"It is enough, of course, to live upon in a way, Cuthbert, but so different from what you were accustomed to."

"I don't suppose you spend two hundred a year," he said, with a smile.

"Oh, no, but a woman is so different. That is just what I have, and of course I don't spend anything like all of it; but

as I said, it is so different with you, who have been accustomed to spend ever so much more."

"I don't find myself in any way pinched. I can assure you my lodgings in the Quartier Latin are not what you would call sumptuous, but they are comfortable enough, and they do not stand me in a quarter of what I paid for my chambers in London. I can dine sumptuously on a franc and a half. Another franc covers my breakfast, which is generally *café au lait* and two eggs; another franc suffices for supper. So you see that my necessaries of life, including lodgings and fuel, do not come to anything like half my income, and I can spend the rest in riotous living if I choose."

The girl looked at him earnestly.

"You are not growing cynical, I hope, Cuthbert?"

"I hope not. I am certainly not conscious of it. I don't look cynical, do I?"

"No," she said, doubtfully. "I do not see any change in you, but what do you do with yourself?"

"I paint," he said.

"Really!"

"Really and truly, I have become what you wanted me to become, a very earnest person indeed, and some day people may even take to buying my pictures."

"I never quite know when you are in earnest, Cuthbert; but if it is true it is very good news. Do you mean that you are really studying?"

"I am indeed. I work at the studio of one M. Goudé, and if you choose to inquire, you will find he is perhaps the best master in Paris. I am afraid the Prussians are going to interrupt my studies a good deal. This has made me angry and I have enlisted—that is to say, been sworn in as a member of the Chasseurs des Écoles, which most of the students at Goudé's have joined."

"What! You are going to fight against the Germans!" she exclaimed, indignantly. "You never can mean it, Cuthbert."

"I mean it, I can assure you," he said, amused at her indig-

nation. "I suppose you are almost Germanized, and regard their war against the French as a just and holy cause."

"Certainly I do," she said, "though of course, I should not say so here. I am in France and living in a French family, and naturally I would say nothing that would hurt the feelings of the people round me, but there can be no doubt that the French deserve all the misfortunes that have fallen upon them. They would have invaded Germany, and all these poor young Germans have been torn away from their friends and families to fight."

"So have these young Frenchmen. To my mind the war was deliberately forced upon France, but I think we had better agree to differ on this subject. You have been among Germans and it is not unnatural that you should have accepted their version. I have been living among Frenchmen, and although I do not say that it would not have been much wiser if they had avoided falling into the pit dug for them, my sympathies are wholly with them, except in this outburst of folly that has resulted in the establishment, for a time at any rate, of a Republic. Now, I have no sympathy whatever with Republics, still less for a Republic controlled by political adventurers, and like many Frenchmen I am going to fight for France, and in no way for the Republic. At any rate let us agree to avoid the subject altogether. We shall never convince each other however much we might argue it over."

The girl was silent for two or three minutes, and then said—

"Well, we will agree not to quarrel over it. I don't know how it is that we always see things so differently, Cuthbert. However, we may talk about your doings without arguing over the cause. Of course you do not suppose there will be much fighting—a week or two will see the end of it all."

"Again we differ," he said. "I believe that there will be some sharp fighting, and I believe that Paris will hold out for months."

She looked at him incredulously.

"I should have thought," she said, after a pause, "you were the last person who would take this noisy shouting mob seriously."

"I don't think anything of the mob one way or the other," he said. "I despise them utterly; but the troops and the mobiles are sufficient to man the forts and the walls, and I believe that middle-class corps, like the one I have entered, will fight manfully; and the history of Paris has shown over and over again that the mob of Paris, fickle, vain-headed, noisy braggadocios as they are, and always have been, can at least starve well. They held out against Henry of Navarre till numbers dropped dead in the streets, and until the Spaniards came at last from the Netherlands and raised the siege, and I believe they will hold out now. They have courage enough, as has been shown over and over again at the barricades, but they will be useless for fighting because they will submit to no discipline. Still, as I said, they can starve, and it will be a long time indeed before the suffering will become intense enough to drive them to surrender. I fear that you have altogether underrated the gravity of the situation, and that you will have very severe privations to go through before the siege is over."

"I suppose I can stand it as well as others," she laughed, "but I think you are altogether wrong. However, if it should come it will be very interesting."

"Very," he said, shortly, "but I doubt if you will see it quite in the same light when it comes to eating rats."

"I should not eat them," she said, decidedly.

"Well, when it comes to that or nothing, I own that I myself shall eat rats if I can get them. I have heard that the country rat, the fellow that lives in ricks, is by no means bad eating, but I own to having a doubt as to the Paris rat."

"It is disgusting to think of such a thing," she said, indignantly, "the idea is altogether ridiculous."

"I do not know whether you consider that betting is among the things that woman has as much right to do as man; but if you do, I am ready to wager it will come to rats before Paris surrenders."

"I never made a bet in my life," she said, "but I will wager five francs with you that there will be nothing of the sort. I do not say that rats may not be eaten in the poor quarters. I do

not know what they eat there. I hear they eat horse-flesh, and for anything I know they may eat rats; but I will wager that rats will never be openly sold as an article of food before Paris surrenders."

"It is a bet," he said, "and I will book it at once," and he gravely took out a pocket-book and made an entry. "And now," he said, as he replaced the book in his pocket, "how do you pass your time?"

"I spend some hours every day at the Bibliothêque. Then I take a walk in this quarter and all round the Boulevards. One can walk just as freely there as one could in Germany, but I find that I cannot venture off them into the poorer quarters; the people stare, and it is not pleasant."

"I certainly should not recommend you to make experiments that way. In the great thoroughfares a lady walking by herself passes unnoticed, especially if she looks English or American. They are coming to understand that young women in those countries are permitted an amount of freedom that is shocking to the French mind, but the idea has not permeated to the lower strata of society.

"If you are really desirous of investigating the ways of the female population of the poorer quarters, I shall be happy to escort you whenever you like, but I do not think you will be altogether gratified with the result of your researches, and I think that you would obtain a much closer insight into French lower class life by studying Balzac and some of the modern writers—they are not always savory, but at least they are realistic."

"Balzac is terrible," she said, "and some of the others I have read a little of are detestable. I don't think you can be serious in advising me to read them."

"I certainly should not advise you to read any of them, Miss Brander, if you were a young lady of the ordinary type; but as you take up the cause of woman in general it is distinctly necessary that you should study all the phases of female life. How else can you grapple with the question?"

"You are laughing at me again, Mr. Hartington," she said, somewhat indignantly.

"I can assure you that I am not. If your crusade is in favor only of girls of the upper and middle classes, you are touching but the fringe of the subject, for they are outnumbered by twenty to one by those of other classes, and those in far greater need of higher life than the others."

"It seems rather hopeless," Mary Brander said, despondently, after a pause, "one is so unable to influence them."

"Exactly so. You are setting yourself to move a mountain. When the time comes there may be an upheaval, and the mountain may move of its own accord; but the efforts of a thousand or ten thousand women as earnest as yourself would be no more use in proportion, than those of a colony of ants working to level the mountain."

"Don't discourage me, Cuthbert," she said, pitifully. "I do believe with all my heart in my principles, but I do often feel discouraged. The task seems to grow larger and more difficult the more I see of it, and I own that living a year among German women was rather crushing to me."

"That I can quite understand," he said, with a smile, "the average German woman differs as widely in her ideas—I do not say aspirations, for she has none—from your little group of theorists at Girton as the poles are apart."

"But do not think," she replied, rallying, "that I am in the least shaken because I see that the difficulty is greater than I have looked for. Your simile of ants is not correct. Great things can be done by individuals. Voltaire and Rousseau revolutionized French thought from the top to the bottom. Why should not a great woman some day rise and exercise as great influence over her sex as these two Frenchmen did? But do not let us talk about that any more. I want to hear more about what you are doing. I have thought of you so much during the past year—it has all seemed so strange and so sad. Are you really working hard—I mean steadily and regularly?"

"You evidently think that impossible," he laughed, "but I can assure you it is true. If you doubt me I will give you Goudé's address, and if you call upon him and say that you have an interest in me—you can assign any reason you like, say that you

are an aunt of mine and intend to make me your heir—and beg him to inform you frankly of his opinion of my work and progress, I feel sure that he will give you an account that will satisfy your doubts."

"I don't think I could do that," she said, seriously. "There, you are laughing at me again," she broke off as she looked up at him. "Of course I could not do such a thing, but I should very greatly like to know about you."

"I do think, Miss Brander, I am working hard enough and steady enough to satisfy even you. I did so for six months in England with a fellow named Terrier. He was just the master I wanted. He had not a shadow of imagination, but was up in all the technical details of painting, and in six months' hard work I really learnt to paint; previous to that I knew nothing of painting. I could make a colored sketch, but that was all, now I am on the highway to becoming an artist. Goudé will only receive pupils whom he considers likely to do him credit, and on seeing two of the things I had done after I had been working with Terrier, he accepted me at once. He is a splendid master—out and away the best in Paris, and is really a great artist himself. He is a peppery little man and will tolerate no nonsense, and I can assure you that he is well satisfied with me. I am going to set to work to do a couple of pictures on my own account for next year's Salon. I should have waited another year before trying my wings, if he had not encouraged me to venture at once, and as he is very much opposed to his pupils painting for exhibition until they are sufficiently advanced to begin with a success, it is proof that he has at least some hopes of me."

"I am glad indeed, Cuthbert. I shan't be quite so sorry now as I have been about your losing Fairclose. It is so much nobler to work than it is to fritter away a life doing nothing. How tiresome it is," she said, "that you have taken this unfortunate idea in your head of joining a French corps. It will unsettle you altogether."

"Really," he broke in with a laugh, "I must protest against being considered so weak and unstable. You had a perfect right

in thinking me lazy, but I don't think you have any right in considering me a reed to be shaken by every passing wind. I can assure you that I am very fixed in my resolves. I was content to be lazy before simply because there was no particular reason for my being otherwise, and I admit that constitutionally I may incline that way; but when a cataclysm occurred, and, as I may say, the foundations were shaken, it became necessary for me to work, and I took a resolution to do so, and have stuck to it. Possibly I should have done so in any case. You see when a man is told by a young lady he is a useless idler, who does but cumber the earth, it wakes him up a little."

"I am sure I didn't say that," Mary said, indignantly, but with a hot flush on her cheeks.

"Not in those precise words, but you spoke to that effect, and my conscience told me you were not far wrong in your opinion. I had begun to meditate whether I ought not to turn over a new leaf when I came in suddenly for Fairclose; that of course seemed to knock it all on the head. Then came what we may call the smash. This was so manifestly an interposition of Providence in the direction of my bestirring myself that I took the heroic resolution to work."

Mary felt that it was desirable to avoid continuing the subject. She had long since come to regard that interview in the garden as a sort of temporary aberration on his part, and that although, perhaps, sincere at the moment, he had very speedily come to laugh at his own folly, and had recognized that the idea was altogether ridiculous. Upon her it had made so little impression that it had scarcely occurred to her when they met, that any passage of the sort had taken place, and had welcomed him as the lad she had known as a child, rather than as the man who had, under a passing impulse, asked her to marry him.

"I think," she said suddenly, "I will fetch Madame Michaud in. It will be nice for you to come here in the evening sometimes, and it would be better for her to ask you to do so than for me. These French people have such funny ideas."

"It would certainly be more pleasant," he agreed, "and even-

ing will be the time that I have most leisure—that is to say, when we do not happen to be on duty, as to which I am very vague at present. They say the sailors will garrison the forts and the army take the outpost duty; but I fancy, when the Germans really surround us, it will be necessary to keep so strong a force outside the walls, that they will have to call out some of us in addition. The arrangement at present is, we are to drill in the morning and we shall paint in the afternoon; so the evening will be the only time when we shall be free."

"What do you do in the evening generally? You must find it very lonely."

"Not at all. I have an American who is in our school, and who lodges in the same house as I do. Then there are the students, a light-hearted, merry set of young fellows. We have little supper-parties and go to each other's rooms to chatter and smoke. Then, occasionally, I drop into the theatre. It is very much like the life I had in London, only a good deal more lively and amusing, and with a great deal less luxury and a very much smaller expenditure; and—this is very serious I can assure you—very much worse tobacco."

The girl laughed merrily.

"What will you do about smoking when you are reduced to the extremity you prophesy?"

"That point is, I confess, troubling me seriously. I look forward with very much greater dread to the prospect of having to smoke dried leaves and the sweepings of tobacco warehouses, than I do to the eating of rats. I have been making inquiries of all sorts as to the state of the stock of tobacco, and I intend this evening to invest five pounds in laying in a store; and mean to take up a plank and hide it under the floor, and to maintain the most profound secrecy as to its existence. There is no saying whether, as time goes on, it may not be declared an offence of the gravest character for any one to have a private store of any necessary. If you have any special weaknesses, such as chocolate or tea, or anything of that sort, I should advise you not to lose a moment in laying in a good stock. You will see in another week, when people begin to

recognize generally what a siege means, that everything eatable will double in price, and in a month only millionaires will be able to purchase them."

"I really will buy some tea and chocolate," she said.

"Get in a good stock," he said. "Especially of chocolate. I am quite serious, I can assure you. Unfortunately, you have no place for keeping a sheep or two, or a bullock; and bread, at the end of a couple of months, could scarcely be eaten; but, really, I should advise you to invest in a dozen of those big square boxes of biscuits, and a ham or two may come in as a welcome addition some day."

Mary laughed incredulously, but she was much more inclined than before to look at matters seriously, when, on fetching Madame Michaud in, that lady, in the course of conversation, mentioned that her husband had that morning bought three sacks of flour and a hundred tins of preserved meats.

"He is going to get some boxes," she said, "and to have the flour emptied into them, then the baker will bring them round in a cart, so that no one will guess it is flour. He says it is likely that there will be an order issued that everything of that sort is to be given into a public store for general distribution, so it must be brought here quietly. He tells me that every one he knows is doing the same thing. My servant has been out this morning eight times and has been buying eggs. She has brought a hundred each time, and we are putting them in a cask in salt."

"Do you really think all that is necessary, madame?" Mary asked, doubtfully.

"Most certainly I do. They say everything will go up to such prices as never were heard of before. Of course, in a month or two the country will come to our rescue and destroy the Prussians, but till then we have got to live. Already eggs are fetching four times as much as they did last week. It is frightful to think of it, is it not, monsieur?"

"If I were in your place, madame, I would not reckon too surely on relief in a month. I think that there is no doubt that, as you say, there will be a prohibition of anyone keeping

provisions of any sort, and everything will be thrown into the public magazines. Likely enough every house will be searched, and you cannot hide your things too carefully."

"But why should they insist on everything being put in public magazines?" Mary asked. "It will not go further that way than if people keep their own stocks and eat them."

"It will be necessary, if for nothing else, to prevent rioting when the pinch comes, and people are starving in the poorer quarters. You may be sure if they have a suspicion that the middle and upper classes have food concealed in their houses, they will break in and sack them. That would only be human nature, and therefore in the interest of order alone a decree forbidding anyone to have private stores would have to be passed; besides it would make the food go much further, for you may be sure that everything will be doled out in the smallest quantities sufficient to keep life together, and before the end of the siege comes each person may only get two or three ounces of bread a day."

Madame Michaud nodded as if prepared to be reduced even to that extremity.

"You are right, monsieur, I am going to get stuff and to make a great number of small bags to hold the flour; then we shall hide it away under the boards in many places, so that if they find some they may not find it all."

"The idea is a good one, madame, but it has its disadvantages. If they find one parcel they will search so closely everywhere that they will find the rest. For that reason one good hiding-place, if you could invent one, would be better than many."

"One does not know what is best to do," Madame Michaud said, with a gesture of tragic despair. "Who could have thought that such a thing could happen to Paris!"

"It is unexpected, certainly," Cuthbert agreed, "but it has been foreseen, otherwise they would never have taken the trouble to build this circle of forts round Paris. They are useful now not only in protecting the city but in covering a wide area, where the cattle and sheep may feed under the protection of

the guns. I don't think we are as likely to be as badly off for meat as for bread, for after the flocks and herds are all eaten up there are the horses, and of these there must be tens of thousands in Paris."

"That is a comfort, certainly," the Frenchwoman said, calmly, while Mary Brander made a little gesture of disgust.

"I have never tried horseflesh myself, at least that I know of, but they say it is not so bad; but I cannot think that they will have to kill the horses for food. The country will not wait until we are reduced to that extremity."

"Mr. Hartington has joined one of the regiments of volunteers, Madame Michaud."

"That is good of you, monsieur; my husband is in the National Guard, and they say every one will have to take up a musket; but as you are a foreigner, of course this would not apply to you."

"Well, for the time being I consider myself a Parisian, and as a German shell is just as likely to fall on the roof of the house where I live as on any other, I consider myself to be perfectly justified in doing my best in self-defence."

"I trust that you will call whenever you are disposed in the evening, monsieur," Madame Michaud said, cordially; "it will give my husband pleasure to meet an English gentleman who is voluntarily going to fight in the cause of France."

"Thank you, madame. I shall be very glad to do so. Mademoiselle's father is a very old friend of our family, and I have known her ever since she was a little child. It will be pleasant to me to make the acquaintance of monsieur. And now, Miss Brander, I must be going."

CHAPTER VII.

As he sauntered back into the city, Cuthbert met an English resident with whom he had some slight acquaintance.

"So you are not among the great army of deserters, Mr. Phipson?"

"No, I thought it better to stay here and see it out. If the Germans come in I shall hang out the English flag and I have on doubt that it will be all right. If I go away the chances are that I should find the place sacked when I return."

"Then, of course, you will keep your place open."

"It will be closed to the public to-morrow—to the public, mind you. My English customers and friends, if they come to the little door in the Arcade, and give two knocks, and then three little ones with their knuckles on the door, will find it open, and can be served as long as there is any liquor left; but for the last three days I have been clearing out nearly all my stock. The demand has been tremendous, and I was glad enough to get rid of it, for even if the place isn't looted by the mob all the liquors might be seized by the authorities and confiscated for public use. I shall be glad when the doors are closed, I can tell you, for these people are enough to make one sick. The way they talk and brag sets my fingers itching, and I want to ask them to step into the back room, take off their coats, those uniforms they are so proud of, and stand up for a friendly round or two just to try what they are made of.

"I reckon if a chap can't take one on the nose and come up smiling, he would not be worth much when he has to stand up against the Prussians. I thought I understood them pretty well after having been coachman here for over twenty years, but I see now that I was wrong altogether. Of course I knew they were beggars to talk, but I always thought that there was something in it, and that if it came to fighting they would show up pretty well; but to hear them going on now as to what France will do and doing nothing themselves, gives one a sickener. Then the way as they blackguard the Emperor, who wasn't by any means a bad chap, puts my monkey up I can tell you. Why there is not one in fifty of them as is fit to black his boots. He had a good taste in horses too, he had; and when I hear them going on, it is as much as I can do not to slip in to them.

"That is one reason why I am stopping. A week ago I had pretty well made up my mind that I would go, but they made me so mad that I says to myself, I will stop and see it out, if it

is only for the pleasure of seeing these fellows get the licking they deserve. I was out yesterday evening. There was every café crowded; there was the singing-places fuller than I ever saw them; there were drunken soldiers, who ought to have been with their regiments outside the walls, reeling about the streets. Any one as seed the place would have put it down that it was a great fête-day. As to the Prussians outside no one seemed to give them a thought. If you went from table to table you heard everyone saying that the Germans would be destroyed, and that every one who talked of peace now was a traitor."

"I quite agree with you," Cuthbert said, "they are most extraordinary people. Still I do think they will fight."

"Well, sir, I don't know whether you have heard the news that they have been licked this morning somewhere out near Clamart. I heard just now that a lot of the linesmen bolted and never stopped running till they got into Paris, but they say the Breton mobiles fought well, though they had to fall back at last."

"The troops are disorganized at present," Cuthbert said; "but when you see what a tremendous thrashing they have had it is hardly to be expected that they should fight with any confidence, but when discipline is restored and they have had a few skirmishes they will be different men altogether. As to the mobiles, they are mere peasants at present, but a month of hard work will turn them into soldiers, and I should say better soldiers than the linesmen; but I am afraid they will never make anything out of the National Guard. The only way to do so will be to establish big camps outside the walls and send them all out there and put strict army men in command, with a regiment of regulars in each camp to carry out their orders. It would be necessary, no doubt, to shoot a few hundred of them before anything like discipline could be established; and once a week the whole should be sent out to attack the Germans so as to teach them to be steady under fire. In that way they might be turned into decent soldiers."

"Lord bless you, sir, Government would never try that. There would be barricades in the streets in no time, and as

the soldiers are all outside the walls the mob would upset the Government in a week."

"I am not at all saying it would do, but it is the only thing to make soldiers of them."

"Well, sir, you will know where to come when things get bad. I don't expect there will be any beer to be had, but I have been down with my son Bob into the cellar for the last four nights. I could not trust the French waiters, and we dug holes and have buried a couple of dozen kegs of my best spirits, so if they make a clear sweep of the rest I reckon we shall be able to keep that door open a goodish while."

"I shan't forget, and I hope that your spirits may escape the searchers, but you know just at present we are not popular in Paris. They have got an idea in their heads that we ought to have declared war against the Germans on their behalf; why, Heaven knows, but you may be sure that all the English places will be very strictly searched."

"Yes, I reckon on that, and we have got them twelve feet deep. It will be a job to get them out as we want them, but there won't be anything else to do and it will keep us in health."

Cuthbert had asked all the students to come in and smoke a pipe that evening in his room, and had ordered supper to be sent in."

"I am going to have it there instead of one of the usual places," he said, "because I don't think it is decent to be feasting in a public at a time like this. I expect it is about the last time we shall have anything like a supper. Things will be altogether beyond the reach of our purses in another week. Besides, I hope we shall be outside before long."

Arnold Dampierre was the first to come in.

"I am disgusted with the Parisians," he said, moodily.

"Well, yes, I am not surprised. It is not quite the spirit in which your people entered on their struggle, Dampierre."

"No, we meant it; the struggle with us was to get to the front. Why, do you know, I heard two or three of the National Guard grumbling in the highest state of indignation, and why, do you think? Because they had to sleep in the open air last night.

Are these the men to defend a city? There will be trouble before long, Cuthbert. The workmen will not stand it; they have no faith in the Government nor in Trochu, nor in any one."

"Including themselves, I hope," Cuthbert smiled.

"They are in earnest. I have been up at——" and he hesitated, "Montmartre this afternoon, and they are furious there."

"They are fools," Cuthbert said, scornfully, "and no small proportion are knaves besides. They read those foul pamphlets and gloat over the abuse of every decently dressed person. They rave against the Prussians, but it is the Bourgeois they hate. They talk of fighting, while what they want is to sack and plunder."

"Nothing of the kind," the American said, hotly. "They want honesty and purity, and public spirit. They see vice more rampant than it was in the days of the Empire. They see the Bourgeois shirking their duty. They see license and extravagance everywhere."

"It is a pity they don't look at home," Cuthbert laughed, good-temperedly. "I have not yet learnt that either purity or honesty, or a sense of duty are conspicuous at Montmartre or Belleville. There is just as much empty vaporing there as there is down the Boulevards. As to courage, they may have a chance presently of showing whether they have more of it than the better class. Personally, I should doubt it." Then he added more seriously, "My dear Dampierre, I can of course guess where you have learnt all this. I know that Minette's father is one of the firebrands of his quarter, and that since she has been earning an income here he has never done a stroke of work, but has taken up the profession of politician. I am not doubting his sincerity. He may be for aught I know perfectly in earnest, but it is his capacity I doubt. These uneducated men are able to see but one side of the question, and that is their own.

"I am not at all blind to the danger. I believe it is possible that we are going to have another red revolution. Your men at Belleville and Montmartre are capable of repeating the worst and most terrible features of that most awful time, but you know

what came of it and how it ended. Even now some of these blackguard prints are clamoring for one man to take the supreme control of everything. So far there are no signs of that coming man, but doubtless, in time, another Bonaparte may come to the front and crush down disorder with an iron heel; but that will not be until the need for a saviour of society is evident to all. I hope, my dear fellow, you will not be carried away with these visionary ideas. I can, of course, understand your predilections for a Republic, but between your Republic and the Commune, for which the organs of the mob are already clamoring, there is no shadow of resemblance. They are both founded, it is true, on the will of the majority, but in the States it is the majority of an educated and distinctly law-abiding people —here it is the majority of men who would set the law at defiance, who desire power simply for the purposes of spoliation."

Dampierre would have replied angrily, but at this moment the door opened and two or three of the other students entered.

"Have you heard about that affair at Clamart," they demanded eagerly. "They say the line behaved shamefully, and that Trochu declares they shall be decimated."

"You may be quite sure that if he said so he will not carry it out," Cuthbert said. "The army has to be kept in a good humor, and at any rate until discipline is fully restored it would be too dangerous a task to venture on punishing cowardice. It is unfortunate certainly, but things will get better in time. You can hardly expect to make the fugitives of a beaten army into heroes all at once. I have not the least doubt that if the Germans made an attack in full force they would meet with very slight resistance; but they won't do that. They will go to work in a regular and steady way. They will erect batteries, commanding every road out of the town, and will then sit down and starve us out, hastening the process, perhaps, by a bombardment. But all that will take time. There will be frequent fighting at the outposts, and if Trochu and the rest of them make the most of the material they have at hand, poor as much of it is, they will be able to turn out an army that should be strong enough to throw itself upon any point in the German line and

break its way out ; but it must be an army of soldiers, not a force composed of disheartened fugitives and half-drilled citizens."

" The National Guard are drilling earnestly," René Caillard said. " I have been watching them this afternoon, they really made a very good show."

" The father of a family with a comfortable home and a prosperous business can drill as well as the most careless vaurien, René ; better, perhaps, for he will take much greater pains ; but when it comes to fighting, half a dozen reckless daredevils are worth a hundred of him. I think if I had been Trochu I would have issued an order that every unmarried man in Paris between the ages of sixteen and forty-five should be organized into, you might call it, the active National Guard for continual service outside the walls, while the married men should be reserved for defending the *enceinte* at the last extremity. The outside force might be but a third of the whole, but they would be worth as much as the whole force together. That is why I think that our corps may distinguish itself. We have none of us wives or families and nothing much to lose, consequently we shall fight well. We shan't mind hardships for we have not been accustomed to luxuries. We are fighting as volunteers and not because the law calls us under arms.

" We are educated and have got too much self-respect to bolt like rabbits. I don't say we may not retire. One can't do impossibilities, and if others don't stand, we can't oppose a Prussian Army Corps. There is one thing you must do, and that is preserve good discipline. There is no discipline at all in the National Guard. I saw a party of them yesterday drilling, and two or three of them quietly marched out of the ranks and remonstrated on terms of the most perfect equality, with their colonel as to an order he had given. The maxim of the Republic may do for civil life, though I have not a shadow of belief either in equality or fraternity ; nor have I in liberty when liberty means license ; whether that be so or not equality is not consistent with military discipline. An army in which the idea of equality reigns is not an army but a mob, and is no

more use for fighting purposes than so many armed peasants. The Shibboleth is always absurd and in a case like the present ruinous. The first duty of a soldier is obedience, absolute and implicit, and a complete surrender of the right of private judgment."

"And you would obey an officer if you were sure that he were wrong, Cuthbert?"

"Certainly I would. I might, if the mistake did not cost me my life, argue the matter out with him afterwards, if, as might happen among us, we were personal acquaintances; but I should at the same time carry out the order, whatever it might be, to the best of my power. And now I propose that for this evening we avoid the subject of the siege altogether. In future, engaged as we are likely to be, we shall hardly be able to avoid it, and moreover the bareness of the table and the emptiness of the wine-cups will be a forcible reminder that it will be impossible to escape it. Did you show Goudé your sketch for your picture for the Salon, René."

"I did, after you had all gone, and I have not got over the interview yet. His remarks on the design, conception, and the drawing were equally clear and decisive. He more than hinted that I was a hopeless idiot, that the time he had given me was altogether wasted, that I had mistaken my avocation, and that if the Germans knocked me on the head it would be no loss either to myself or to society in general. It is true that after he had finished he cooled down a bit and made a number of suggestions from which I gathered that if the whole thing were altered, my idea of the background altogether changed, the figures differently posed, the effect of light and shade diametrically reversed, and a few other trifling alterations made, the thing might possibly be hung on the top line. Ma foi, I feel altogether crushed, for I had really flattered myself that the sketch was not altogether without merit."

When the laugh had subsided Cuthbert said—

"Courage, René, Goudé's bark is always worse than his bite, and I have no doubt he will take a much more favorable view of it as you get on."

"It is all very well for you to say so," René said, ruefully. "You are a spoiled child, Goudé has never a word of reproof for you."

"Probably because he knows very well that I shall not break my heart over it. We must hold a committee of inspection on your work to-morrow; none of us have seen your design yet, and we may be able between us to make some useful suggestion."

"No, no," René exclaimed. "Heaven protect me from that. Do you come, Cuthbert; none of us mind what you say about our pictures. Your criticisms do not hurt. One would no more think of being angry with you for using your knife than with a surgeon for performing an operation."

"Very well, René, I will come round early. I have no doubt your sketch is a very good one on the whole, and after a few little changes it will satisfy even Goudé. By the way, have you heard we are to elect our company officers to-morrow?"

"Will you stand? I am sure you would have all our votes—that is twenty-five to start with, and as we know most of the fellows in the company we certainly could secure all those who have not any candidate they want to run; besides, there are, of course, to be three officers, so we should be able to traffic votes."

"No officering for me," Cuthbert laughed. "In the first place I have no greater qualifications for the post than anyone else, and in the second place, I am English, and though I might be elected—thanks to your votes—I should never be liked or trusted; besides, I have not a shadow of ambition that way. I am going to fight if necessary. I shall have my note-book in my pocket, and I have no doubt that when we are lying waiting for our turn to come, I shall have lots of opportunities for jotting down little bits that will work into the great battle picture which is to have the place of honor some day in the Salon. I think it will certainly be pleasant to have one of our own number among the officers, and I propose that each of us puts down on a slip of paper the name of the man he thinks will make the best leader and throw it into a hat; then, whoever gets the

most votes, we will all support, and, as you say, by a little traffic in the votes, we ought to be able to get him in among the three."

"Are you absolutely determined not to stand?"

"Absolutely and positively. So please do not any of you put my name down, two or three votes thrown away like that might alter the decision."

He tore up a sheet of paper into small slips and passed them round.

"Before we begin to write," he said, "let it be understood that no one is to vote for himself. I don't mind telling you who I am going to vote for. It is Henri Vancour. This is a matter in which it should be no question of personal liking. We should choose the man who appears to us best fitted for the post."

The name came as a surprise upon the others, for Henri was one of the last whom it would have occurred to them to choose. Pencils were already in their hands and they were on the point of writing when he spoke, and almost all would have given their votes either for René Caillard or Pierre Leroux, who were the two most popular men among the party. There was a pause for some little time before the pencils went to work.

They had not thought of Henri, but now they did think of him they acknowledged to themselves that there was a good deal to be said in his favor. He was a Norman—quiet, hard-working, and even-tempered. His voice was seldom heard in the chorus of jokes and laughter, but when asked for an opinion he gave it at once concisely and decidedly. He was of medium height and squarely built. His face was cast in a rough mould and an expression of resolution and earnestness was predominant. He had never joined either in the invective against the Emperor, or in the confident anticipations of glorious successes over the Germans.

He listened but said nothing, and when questioned would reply, "Let us see some one do better than the Emperor before we condemn him. We will hope for the best, but so far predictions have been so wrong that it would be better to wait and

see before we blow our trumpets." He had but little genius, this young Norman, but he had perseverance and power.

M. Goudé scolded him less than others with far greater talent, and had once said, "you will never be a great painter, Henri. I doubt if you will ever be in the first line, but you will take a good place in the second. You will turn out your pictures regularly and the work will always be good and solid. You may not win any great prizes, but your work will be esteemed, and in the end you will score as heavily as some of those who possess real genius."

Yes, Henri was, they all felt, now they thought it over, one they could rely upon. He would not lose his head, he would be calm in danger, as he was calm at all other times, and he certainly would show no lack of courage. Accordingly when the papers were opened he was found to have received a considerable majority of the votes.

"Thank you for choosing me, comrades," he said, quietly. "I can only say that if elected I will do my best. A man can't say more than that. Why you should have fixed upon me I cannot think, but that is your business. I think I can promise at any rate that I won't run away."

When the Franc-tireurs des Écoles assembled the next morning, half an hour was given for consultation ; then the vote was taken, and Henri Vancour was declared elected first Lieutenant of the company composed entirely of the art students, the Captain being François des Valles, who belonged to an old provincial family, a tall, dark, handsome young man, extremely popular among his comrades.

"I think he will do very well," Cuthbert said, as the company fell in. "There is no fear of his leaving us when under fire ; his failing, if he has one, will be that he may want to keep us there too long. It is quite as necessary when you are fighting by the side of fellows who are not to be relied on, to know when to retreat as it is to know when to advance."

This was their first parade in uniform. This had been decided upon at the first meeting held to settle the constitution of the corps, and a quiet gray had been chosen which looked neat

and workmanlike by the side of many of the picturesque but inappropriate costumes, selected by the majority of the Franc-tireurs. They had already had three days' drill and had learned to form from line into column and from column into line, to advance as skirmishers and to rally on the centres of the companies. They now marched out through the gates and were first taught to load the chassepots which had been bought by a general subscription in the schools, and then spent the morning in practising, and skirmishing, and advancing and retreating in alternate files.

When they were formed up again the old colonel said, "You are getting on well, men. Two more mornings' work and we will go out and complete our lessons in the face of the enemy."

When dismissed at the end of the third day, they were told to bring next morning, the gray greatcoats and blankets that formed part of their uniform. "Let each man bring with him three days' provisions in his bag," the colonel said, "ammunition will be served out to you and you will soon learn how to use it to advantage."

CHAPTER VIII.

M. GOUDÉ grumbled much when he heard that his whole class were going to be absent for three days.

"A nice interruption to study," he said, "however, you were none of you doing yourselves any good, and you may as well be out in the fields as hanging about the streets gossiping. We can always talk, but during the past six weeks Paris has done nothing but talk. Don't come back with any of your number short. You have all got something in you and are too good for food for Prussian powder."

Cuthbert went that evening to the Michauds, in his uniform, not for the purpose of showing it off, but because men in plain clothes, especially if of fair complexions, were constantly stopped and accused of being German spies, were often ill-treated, and not unfrequently had to pass a night in the cells before

they could prove their identity. Mary gave an exclamation of surprise at seeing him so attired, but made no remark until after chatting for half an hour with the Michauds. The husband presently made the excuse that he had to attend a meeting and went off, while madame took up some knitting, settled herself in an easy chair, and prepared for a quiet doze, then Mary said in English—

"I have no patience with you, Cuthbert, taking part with these foolish people. The more I see of them the more I get tired of their bombast and their empty talk. Every man expects everyone else to do something and no one does anything."

"They have had nothing to stir them into action yet," he said, "only the regulars and the moblots go outside the wall, and the National Guard are practically useless until the Germans make an assault. Besides, three parts of them are married men with families, and nothing short of their homes being in danger will stir them up to risk their lives. We are going out for three days to the outposts, we fall in at five o'clock to-morrow morning."

"You are going to risk your life," she said, indignantly, "for the Parisians, who have no idea whatever of risking theirs. I call it madness."

"You are going against your own doctrines, Miss Brander. Before you were indignant with me for doing nothing and being in earnest about nothing. Now that I am doing something and that in grim earnest, you are just as indignant as you were before."

"I did not mean this sort of thing," she said.

"No, I don't suppose you contemplated this. But you wanted me to work for work's sake, although as it seemed then there was no occasion for me to work."

"If it had been on the other side I should not have minded."

"Just so," he smiled. "You have become Germanized, I have not. My friends here have all enlisted; I am going with them partly because they are my friends and partly because it is evident the Germans might have well stopped this war before

now, but they demand terms that France can never submit to as long as there is the faintest hope of success. You need not be at all anxious about me. We are not going to attack the Prussian positions I can assure you. We are only going out to do a little outpost duty, to learn to hear the bullets flying without ducking, and to fire our rifles without shutting our eyes. I don't suppose there are five men in the three companies who have ever fired a rifle in their lives.

"You see the Franc-tireurs are to a great extent independent of the military authorities—if you can call men military authorities who exercise next to no authority over their soldiers. The Franc-tireurs come and go as they choose, and a good many of them wear the uniform only as a means of escape from serving, and as a whole they are next to useless. I think our corps will do better things. We are all students of art, law or physic, and a good deal like such volunteer corps as the artists or 'Inns of Court.' Some of the younger professors are in the ranks, and at least we are all of average intelligence and education, so I fancy we shall fight if we get a chance. I don't mean now, but later on when we have gained confidence in ourselves and in our rifles. Just at present the Parisians are disposed to look upon the Germans as bogies, but this will wear off, and as discipline is recovered by the line, and the mobiles grow into soldiers, you will see that things will be very different; and although I don't indulge in any vain fancy that we are going to defeat the German army, I do think that we shall bear ourselves like men and show something of the old French spirit."

"That will be a change, indeed," the girl said, scornfully.

"Yes, it will be a change," he answered, quietly, "but by no means an impossible one. You must not take the vaporings and bombast of the Paris Bourgeois or the ranting of Blanqui and the Belleville roughs as the voice of France. The Germans thought that they were going to take Paris in three days. I doubt if they will take it in three months. If we had provisions I should say they would not take it in treble that time. They certainly would not do it without making regular ap-

proaches, and before they can do that they have to capture some of the forts. These, as you know, are manned by 10,000 sailors, hardy marines and Bretons, well disciplined and untainted by the politics which are the curse of this country. Well, I must be going. I have to purchase my three days' store of provisions on my way back to my lodgings and shall have to turn out early."

"Don't do anything rash," she said, earnestly.

"I can assure you rashness is not in my line at all, and I don't suppose we shall ever get within five hundred yards of a Prussian soldier. You need not be in the least uneasy, even supposing that you were inclined to fidget about me?"

"Of course, I should fidget about you," she said, indignantly. "After knowing you ever since I was a little child, naturally I should be very sorry if anything happened to you."

"By the way," he said, without pursuing the subject farther, "I hear that there is a movement on foot for forming a corps of women. If they should do so it will afford you another illustration of the equality of your sex to ours in all matters, and I will go so far as to admit that I would much rather lead a company of the market-women than one composed of these Parisian shopkeepers."

"Don't, Mr. Hartington," she said, appealingly, "I don't feel equal to fighting now."

"Then we won't fight. Good-bye! If we are not lucky enough to light upon some empty cottages to sleep in I fancy the gloss will be taken out of this uniform before I see you again." He picked up his cap, shook hands, and was gone.

Madame Michaud woke up as the door closed.

"He has gone? your tall countryman."

"Yes, he is going out to-morrow to the outposts. I think it is very silly of him and very wrong mixing up in a quarrel that does not concern him, especially when there are tens of thousands here in Paris who, instead of fighting for their country, are content to sit all day in cafés and talk."

"They will fight when the time comes," Madame Michaud

said, complacently. "They will fight like heroes. The Prussians will learn what Frenchmen are capable of doing."

But Mary had no patience just at present to listen to this sort of thing, and with the excuse that her head ached went at once to her room.

"I do not understand these English," Madame Michaud thought, as she drew the lamp nearer and resumed her knitting, " here are a young woman and a young man who are more like comrades than lovers. She was angry, more angry than I thought she could be, for she is generally good-tempered, when I asked her, the first time he came, if they were *affiancés*, 'We are old friends, madame,' she said, 'and nothing but friends. Cannot a girl have a man as a friend without there being any thought of love? In England people are friends, they can talk and laugh to each other without any silly ideas of this sort occurring to them. This is one of the things that keeps woman back in the scale, this supposition that she is always thinking of love.' I did not believe her then, but I have listened to-night when they thought I was asleep, and I even peeped out two or three times between my eyelids. I could not understand a word of what they said, but one can tell things by the tone without understanding the words. There was no love-making. She scolded him and he laughed. He sat carelessly in his chair, and did not move an inch nearer to her. She was as straight and as upright as she always is.

"That is not the way lovers act when one is going out to fight. I peeped out when he shook hands with her. He did not hold her hand a moment, he just shook it. They are strange people, these English. It would be wrong for a French girl thus to talk to a young man, but I suppose it is different with them. Who can understand these strange islanders? Why, if Lucien were going out to fight I should dissolve in tears, I should embrace him and hang on his neck; I might even have hysterics, though I have never had them in my life. She is a good girl, too, though she has such strange ideas about women. What can she want for them? I manage the house and Lucien goes to his office. If I say a thing is to be done in the house

it is done. I call that equality. I cannot tell what she is aiming at. At times it seems to me that she is even more mad than her compatriots, and yet on other subjects she talks with good sense. What her father and mother can be about to let her be living abroad by herself is more than I can think. They must be even more mad than she is."

Work at M. Goudé's school went on steadily during the intervals between the turns of the Franc-tireurs des Écoles going out beyond the walls. Indeed M. Goudé acknowledged that the work was better than usual. Certainly the studio was never merrier or more full of life. So far from the active exercise and the rough work entailed by the constant vigilance necessary during the long night-watches, diminishing the interest of the young fellows in their work in the studio, it seemed to invigorate them, and they painted as if inflamed with the determination to make up for lost time.

It converted them, in fact, for the time, from a group of careless, merry young fellows, into men with a sense of responsibility. Their time when away from the studio had previously been spent in follies and frivolities. They often drank much more than was good for them, smoked inordinately, were up half the night, and came in the morning to work with heavy heads and nerveless hands. Now they were soldiers, men who matched themselves against the invaders of their country, who risked their lives in her defence, and they bore themselves more erectly, a tone of earnestness replaced a languid indifference and a carelessness as to their work, and in spite of some privations in the way of food their figures seemed to expand.

The loss of two nights' sleep a week rendered early hours necessary, and ensured sound sleep during the remaining five. The discipline of the studio had been relaxed. The master felt that at such a time he could not expect the same silent concentration on work that it demanded at other times, but he found to his surprise that while they laughed and joked as they painted, they worked none the worse for this, and that in fact there was a general improvement manifest.

Cuthbert heartily enjoyed the change; the prevailing tone was

more like that to which he was accustomed at the studios of St. John's Wood than was the somewhat strict discipline that had before prevailed in the studio, and he enjoyed the hard work and excitement outside the walls. The fact that they were running the same risks and sharing in the same work was an added bond of union among the students; and, although, when they met, as they very frequently did in each other's lodgings, there was less uproarious fun than before; there was a healthier atmosphere, and more pleasant and earnest talk.

Arnold Dampierre was the only exception to the general rule. When in the field he evinced no want of spirit, and upon the contrary was always ready to volunteer when a few men were required to crawl forward at night to ascertain the precise position of the Prussian outposts or to endeavor to find out the meaning of any stir or movement that might be heard towards their front. At other times his fits of moodiness seemed to increase. He was seldom present at any of the gatherings of his companions, but went off after work at the studio was over, and it was generally late at night before he returned to his rooms.

Cuthbert felt that the American avoided all opportunities of conversation with him alone. He replied cordially enough to his greeting when they met, but they no longer dropped in to smoke a pipe in each other's apartments as they formerly had done. Cuthbert had no great difficulty in guessing at the reasons for this change in their relations. He himself when he first noticed that Arnold was taking the first place with Minette had spoken to him half-jestingly, half-seriously, on the subject. He had never made any secret of his own distrust of the model, and in the early days of their intercourse had spoken freely to Arnold on the subject. He could understand that if the American, as it appeared, had become really attached to her, he would shrink from the risk of any expostulations on the course he had adopted.

Cuthbert believed that his comrade was at present in a state of indecision, and that, although deeply in love, he had not as

yet been able to bring himself to the idea of taking Minette back as his wife to his home in Louisiana.

"It would be sheer madness," he said to himself, "and yet I have no doubt it will end in his doing so, but as he must know it is a piece of stupendous folly, I can understand his reluctance to risk my speaking to him on the subject. I am awfully sorry for him, but I know it is one of those cases in which, now that it has gone as far as it has, it would be worse than useless to try to interfere, and would only make him more bent upon going through with it. I don't see that one can do anything but trust to the chapter of accidents. Minette, dazzled as she might be by the prospect of marrying a gentleman and a man of property, might still hesitate to do so if it would entail her having to leave Paris and live abroad.

"I have no doubt that she is very fond of Dampierre, but she may change her mind. He may be killed before this business is over. He may decide to return to America directly the siege ends, with the idea of coming over to fetch her afterwards, and either he may get over his infatuation, or on his return may find that some one else has supplanted him in her affections. I should not fancy that constancy would be one of her strong points; at any rate I do not see that I can do any good by meddling in the matter, though if Dampierre spoke to me about it, I should certainly express my opinion frankly. It is much the best that things should go on between us as they are now doing. He is a hot-headed beggar, and the probabilities are strong in the favor of our having a serious quarrel if the subject were ever broached between us."

One evening Cuthbert had taken up a book after his return from the studio, and sat reading until it was long past his usual dinner hour before he went out. He passed through several badly lighted streets on his way to the restaurant in the Palais Royal, where he intended to dine. There were but few people about, for the evening was wet. He was vaguely conscious that some one was going in the same direction as himself, for he heard footsteps following him a short distance behind. In one of the worst lighted and most silent streets the steps suddenly

quickened. Cuthbert turned sharply round. He was but just in time, for a man who had been following him was on the point of springing upon him with uplifted arm.

Cuthbert felt rather than saw that there was a knife in his hand, and struck straight from the shoulder at his face; the fellow was in the act of striking when he received the blow. He fell as if shot, the knife, flying from his hand, clattering on the pavement several yards away. Cuthbert stood for a moment prepared to strike again if the man rose, but as he made no movement he turned on his heel and walked on.

"It would serve him right if I were to give the scoundrel in charge for attempted murder," he said, "but it would give me no end of bother. It would not be worth the trouble, and he has been pretty well punished. I have cut my knuckles, and I imagine that when he comes to he will find himself minus some of his teeth. I wonder what his object was—robbery, I suppose—and yet it is hardly likely that the fellow would have singled me out and decided to kill me on the off chance of finding something worth taking. He could not have seen that I have a watch on, for my greatcoat is buttoned. It is more like an act of private revenge, but I have never given anyone of that class any reason to dislike me. Cartainly the man followed me for some distance, for I have heard the steps behind me ever since I turned off into these quiet streets.

"By the way," he exclaimed, suddenly, "I should not be at all surprised if he took me for Dampierre. We are about the same height, and although I am a good many inches wider than he is, that might not be noticed in the dark. If the fellow was watching outside the door, and had known nothing of there being another man of the same height in the house, he might very well have taken me for Arnold. He spends half his time up at Montmartre, and may likely enough have given offence to some of the ruffians up there; when he is not in a pleasant temper he does not mind what he says. Possibly, too, the fellow may be an admirer of Minette, and the thing may be this outcome of jealousy. At any rate I will tell him in the morning about the affair and let him take warning by it if he chooses."

Accordingly, next morning he waited outside in the street for Arnold, who was generally the last to arrive at the studio.

"Rather an unpleasant thing happened yesterday evening, Dampierre. I was followed from here and attacked suddenly in one of the back streets leading up to the Boulevards. I had heard footsteps behind me for a little time and had a vague sort of idea that I was being followed. The fellow ran up suddenly and I had just time to turn and hit out. He was in the act of striking with a knife, and if I had been a second later he would probably have settled me. As it was I knocked him down and I fancy I stunned him. At any rate he did not move, so I walked on. Of course it may have been a mere vulgar attempt at murder and robbery, but from the fact that this man followed me for some considerable distance I should say it was not so, but a question of revenge. I don't know that anyone in Paris has any cause of quarrel with me, but the idea afterwards occurred to me that it might be that he took me for you. We are about the same height, and if he was watching the house he might, when I came out, mistake one for the other. Of course I have not a shadow of reason for supposing that you have an enemy, but at any rate I thought it as well to tell you about it, so that you might be on your guard, as I shall certainly be, in the future."

Arnold was silent for a minute.

"I should not be surprised if you are right, Hartington; they are a rough lot at Montmartre, and it is possible that I may, without knowing it, have rubbed some of them the wrong way. I suppose you did not notice what he was like?"

"No, it was too dark, and the whole affair too sudden for me to see anything of the features. He was in a blouse with the low cap workmen generally wear. I should say he stood four or five inches shorter than we do—about five feet eight or so. He was a square-built fellow. If you happen to come across him I fancy you may recognize him, not from my description but from my handiwork. You see," and he pointed to his right hand, which was wrapped up in an handkerchief, "I hit him hard and have cut two of my knuckles pretty badly—I fancy

against his teeth. If so, I think it likely that two or three of them will be missing, and as a man of that sort is hardly likely to go at once to a dentist to have the gap filled up, it may prove a guide to you.

"For the next day or two his lips are sure to be swollen pretty badly. Of course if you have no one in your mind's eye as being specially likely to make an attempt upon your life these little things will afford you no clue whatever, but if you have any sort of suspicion that one of three or four men might be likely to have a grudge against you, they may enable you to pick out the fellow who attempted my life. Of course I may be mistaken altogether and the fellow may have been only an ordinary street ruffian. Personally it won't make much difference to me, for I am pretty handy with my fists, but as I know you have had no practice that way, I recommend you always to carry a pistol when you go out at night."

"I always do, Hartington; I always have one in each pocket of my coat."

"Well, they may be useful, but I should recommend you to be careful, and to walk in the middle of the street when you are in doubtful neighborhoods. A pistol is very good in its way, but it takes time to get it out, and cock it, while one's fist is always ready for service at an instant's notice."

By this time they had arrived at the door of the studio. Arnold made no allusion to the subject for some days, and then meeting Cuthbert at the door of his house, said—

"By the way, Hartington, I have reason to believe that you were right that that blow you luckily escaped was meant for me. However, I don't think there will be any recurrence of the matter; in fact, I may say that I am sure there won't."

"That is all right then, Dampierre. Of course I don't want the matter followed up in any way, and should not have spoken about it had I not thought that I ought to give you warning.

"I feel very much indebted to you anyhow, Hartington. Probably had I been in your place the matter would have gone altogether differently."

Arnold had in fact learnt with absolute certainty who had

been Cuthbert's assailant. When he went up to Montmartre he told Minette what had happened, and added: "He suspects that the scoundrel took him in the dark for me."

"Why should any one bear ill-will to you?" Minette asked.

"That I can't say, but I do think that very likely he is right. He keeps himself to himself, never attends meetings of any kind, and can hardly have made an enemy, while it is possible that I may have done so."

Minette was thoughtful for some time, and when her father joined them and said that it was time to be off to a meeting, she asked him abruptly—

"Have you seen Jean Diantre to-day?"

"Ay, I have seen him, and a pretty sight he is."

"How is that, father?"

"He took more liquor than was good for him and got a bad fall as he was going upstairs to his room, and as luck would have it, his mouth caught the edge of the stone step. His lips were all cut and swollen to four times their usual size and three of his teeth are out. Mon Dieu, what a crash he must have got! He has been drinking a great deal lately, and I have warned him over and over again that he would get himself into trouble; but as a rule liquor does not affect him that way, he gets sulky and bad-tempered, but he can generally walk steadily enough."

"Father, you must come with us to his lodgings," Minette exclaimed. "I have something to say to him. I suppose he is up?"

"But it is time to be at the meeting Minette. What do you want to see him for?"

"Never mind the meeting," she said, impatiently. "We shall be there before it is done. It is more important that I should see Jean."

"Well, if it must be, it must," Dufaure grumbled, shrugging his shoulders. "When you take a thing into your head I know it is of no use talking."

Jean Diantre was sitting with two or three of his mates in his attic over a small brazier of charcoal. They rose in surprise at

the entrance of Minette and her father, followed by the American. The girl, without speaking, walked straight up to Jean.

"I knew you were a miserable," she said, bitterly, "a drunken, worthless scamp, but until now I did not know you were a murderer. Yes, comrades, this man with whom you sit and smoke is a miserable assassin. Yesterday evening he tried to take the life of Arnold Dampierre here, whom you all know as a friend of freedom and a hater of tyranny. This brave companion of yours had not the courage to meet him face to face, but stole up behind him in the dark, and in another moment would have slain the man he was following, when the tables were turned. The man he had followed was not Arnold Dampierre but another; and before this wretch could strike with his knife, he knocked him down, stunned him, and left him like a dog that he is on the pavement. No doubt he has told you the lie that he told my father, that he fell while going upstairs drunk. It was a blow of the fist that has marked him as you see. The man he had tried to murder did not even care to give him in charge. He despised this cur too much, and yet the fellow may think himself fortunate. Had it been Monsieur Dampierre it would not have been a fist but a bullet through his head that would have punished him. Now mark me, Jean Diantre," and she moved a pace forward, so suddenly that the man started back, "you are a known assassin and poltroon. If at any time harm befalls Monsieur Dampierre I will stab you with my own hand. If you ever dare to speak to me again I will hold you up to the scorn of the women of the quarter. As it is, your comrades have heard how mean and cowardly a scoundrel you are. You had best move from Montmartre at once, for when this is known no honest man will give you his hand, no man who respects himself will work beside you. Hide yourself elsewhere, for if you stay here I will hound you down, I will see that you have not an hour's peace of your life. We reds have our ideas, but we are not assassins. We do not sneak after a man to stab him in the dark, and when we have arms in our hands we are not to be beaten like curs by an unarmed man."

The other men had shrunk back from him as she spoke. Jean quailed beneath her torrent of contemptuous words and from the fury in her eyes. There was no doubting the fact that her charges were true.

Who drove me to it?" he said sullenly through his swollen lips.

"Who drove you! Drink and your evil temper drove you to it. You wanted to marry me—me who never gave you a word of encouragement; who knew you *au fond*, who knew that you were at the best an idle, worthless scamp, and would never have married you had there been no other living man in the universe. But enough. I have said what I came to say, and you had best take warning. Come, father, you have stood this fellow's friend, and you have been wrong, but you know him now."

Minette passed out through the door Arnold held open for her; her father and Arnold followed, and the four other men, without a word to Jean Diantre, went down the stairs after them, leaving him to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

"It is hardly worth while, Minette," Arnold said, when they reached the street, "the man has had his lesson."

"I could not help it, dear," she said, in a voice so changed from that in which she had spoken to Jean Diantre, that no one would have recognized it as the same; "he had tried to kill you, to take you from me. He thought it was you who had struck him and hated you worse than ever. It is not because he has failed once that he might fail another time. I should never have had a moment's peace when you were away from me, but I think now you will be safe; he will remove his quarters and go to Villette or to the South side; he will not dare to show his face in Montmartre again. You are sure you always carry your pistol, Arnold?"

"Yes, I promised you I would and I have done so. I have a small revolver in each pocket."

"Then in future, when you are out at night promise me always to walk with one hand in your pocket, holding the butt of your pistol, so that you can draw and fire instantly. He knows you have pistols and will not dare to attack you singly, and even should he find two or three villains as bad as himself you would be a match for them."

"I will take care of myself, Minette, but I do not think it likely that he will renew the attempt. I could see that the man was a coward. He was as pale as a sheet, partly with rage that he had been discovered and exposed, but partly, I am sure, from fear too. I know you meant well, dear, but I would rather that you had not done it. I love you best when you are gentle and womanly. You almost frighten me when you blaze out like that."

"I am sorry," she said, penitently; "but I felt for the time mad that your life should have been attempted. I scarcely knew what I was saying. Do you think that anyone could be gentle and mild when she had just heard that her lover, her all, had been almost taken from her by a cowardly blow. Still I know I am wrong. Do not be angry with me, Arnold."

"I am not angry, dear," he said, and truly, for no man can feel really angry with a woman for over-zeal in his own cause. "Do not let us say any more about it; the fellow is not worth a thought. We shall probably never hear of him again."

"I hope not, Arnold, but after what he tried to do I shall never feel quite free from anxiety so long as you are in Paris. I wish your English friend had handed him over to the police."

"I have no doubt he would have done so, but, as he told me, the idea that the fellow was anything else than a street-ruffian did not come to him till afterwards. You know what a business it is bringing a charge of any kind here, and Hartington having himself punished him pretty severely did not care for the trouble of carrying it further."

The news was rapidly spread in the cabarets by the men who had been present at Minette's denunciation that Jean Diantre had endeavored to assassinate the American, and much indig-

nation was excited. Had he drawn a knife upon a fellow-workman over their wine, the matter would have excited but slight reprobation, but that he should have crept up in the dark to attempt to assassinate one who was a denouncer of tyrants, a representative of the great Republic, was voted to be infamous.

Various punishments were suggested as appropriate for such a crime, but Jean did not appear at his accustomed haunts in the morning, and inquiry showed that he had paid his rent the evening before, had sold his furniture for a few francs to one of the other lodgers in the house, and had left the quarter altogether. Resolutions were passed at the next meeting denouncing him as a traitor to the sacred cause of humanity, and then the matter was forgotten altogether save by Minette.

As time went on, the luxuries of life altogether disappeared from the shop-windows, but there was still no lack of the absolute necessaries. The stores of corn and rice turned out to be vastly larger than had been supposed. The herds of cattle gathered under shelter of the guns of the forts had disappeared, but horseflesh was still fairly abundant. Vegetables were not dear, for numbers of people went out every morning to the gardens and fields surrounding Paris and returned laden with them.

The animals in the public collection were all killed and the carcasses of all the eatable creatures sold at high prices, and for a time elephant steak, camel hump, venison, and other meats could be purchased at restaurants, although no doubt the horse furnished the foundation of the greater portion of these dishes.

The swans and other aquatic birds fetched fabulous prices, and their purchase was the occasion of many banquets in houses where such entertainments had become rare. Still there were no signs that the time when Paris was to make its attempt to burst its bonds was at hand. Among the National Guard complaints at the long inaction were incessant, but there was good reason for doubt whether the discontent was as general as it seemed.

It was one thing to talk of sweeping the Prussians before

them, quite another to take a part in the performance. Still the steady drilling that went on had its effect. If the National Guard did not learn discipline they at least gained the power to make a respectable appearance and to go through simple manœuvres fairly.

They walked more erect and even assumed a military swagger and spoke somewhat contemptuously of the line and mobiles, whose discipline was as lax as their own, and among whom drunkenness was rife, for whatever else failed, the supply of wine and spirits appeared inexhaustible. Cuthbert went not unfrequently to dine at the English restaurant of Phipson, where the utter and outspoken contempt of the proprietor for the French in general, and the Parisians in particular, amused him greatly.

"To see these fellows giving themselves military airs when they take care never to get within gunshot of the enemy, it is enough to make one's blood boil, Mr. Hartington. I believe that a couple of score of stable-boys with pitchforks would lick a battalion of them, and it is worse still when one goes out on the Boulevards and sees them sitting at the cafés drinking their absinthe as if there was no enemy within a hundred yards of the place. I have never liked them, sir, but I am downright sickened by them now. I shall sell out as soon as this is over."

"I don't think they are as bad as they seem, Phipson. If the Prussians ever do force a way into Paris, I think you will see that these fellows can fight and fight desperately."

"So will a rat, Mr. Hartington, if you corner him, but he will run as long as he gets the chance. I think it will do them a world of good, and take down some of their cockyness, if the Prussians did come in. I could not stand it, and as you see I have put my shutters up, and only let in English customers I know. I tell you I can't bring myself to serving horseflesh. I have got a few first-rate hams still hanging in the cellar. As long as they last and I can pick up anything fit for a human being to sit down to, I shall go on, but I ain't going to give my customers grub that is only fit for hounds. I have not come

down to be a cat's-meat man yet. As to drink, I have got as you know a goodish supply of as fine whisky as ever was brewed, but it won't be long before that will be the only thing I shall have to sell. I see you still stick to your soldiering, Mr. Hartington."

"Oh, yes, now I have begun, I shall go through with it, though it is not so pleasant as it was a month ago, for the nights are getting cold; still there is plenty of excitement about it, and we manage to keep the Prussians awake as well as ourselves. Whatever it may be with the National Guard there is plenty of pluck among the students. I could not wish to have better comrades."

"Well, there is one advantage, sir, in that uniform. You can go about without being suspected of, for being a foreigner is just the same in the eyes of these chaps as being a spy. It is rum now that while this place is pretty nigh kept up by the money the English and Americans spend here, they don't like us not one bit."

"How do you make that out, Phipson?"

"I don't know that I can make it out at all. I take it it is because we have always licked them, sir, and always shall do. There was the old days when the Black Prince thrashed them. I am a Canterbury boy and have seen his armor hanging up in the Cathedral many a time; that is how I came to know about him, and then I have heard that Marlborough used to crumple them up whenever he met them; and then there was Wellington again. Why, they have never had so much as a chance with us, and on sea we have licked them worse than on land. Well, it ain't in nature men should like that."

"Those are old stories, Phipson, and I don't think they have much to do with the dislike the French have of us. I think it is more because they cannot help seeing for themselves that they are no longer the first power in the world, and that England has passed them in the race."

"That may have something to do with it, sir, but from what I have heard them say and from what I have seen myself, I think it is partly because Frenchmen find themselves but poor

sort of creatures by the side of most Englishmen. I have heard them say that Englishmen walked about the streets of Paris just as if the place belonged to them, and there ain't no doubt that an Englishman does somehow or other put his foot down and square his shoulders in a way you never see a Frenchman do. I have noticed it myself many a time, and then, if he does get into a row with a Frenchman, the fellow hasn't a chance with him. I expect that galls him a bit. Anyhow they don't like it. They don't hate the Americans so much as they do us, though why they shouldn't is more than I can see, for there ain't much difference between us, except that there are very few of them who know how to use their hands. Well, anyhow, I shall be glad to have done with the French, though I will say for them that the lot that uses my place is a good deal better than the generality. For the most part they dress as English ; that is to say they get their clothes made by English tailors, but lor' bless you, it ain't no use. They can't wear them when they have got them, not to look easy and comfortable in them. I have scores of times wondered what the difference is and I could not tell you to save my life, but for all that I can tell a Frenchman the moment he comes in, no matter how he's got up. There ain't no occasion for them to open their mouths. I can spot them as easy as one could tell the difference between a thorough-bred and a common roadster."

As a rule the Franc-tireurs des Écoles went out on the southern or western sides of Paris, but one morning they marched out to St. Denis.

"There has been some pretty hot skirmishing on that side," the colonel said to his officers before starting, "and I have been asked to march you out in that direction, and to take up the outpost duties on a portion of the line there. The troops have been having a pretty hard time of it, and have been pushed backward once or twice, though they have always ended by winning back the ground they had lost. We have a reputation of keeping our eyes open, and the General told me this morning that I might consider it as a compliment we were sent there."

They were marched to a small cluster of houses and relieved two companies of the line who had been on duty there during the night. It was the first time a specific post had been assigned to them, and the men were in high spirits at what they considered an honor. The authorities treated the Franctireurs as being valueless for any real fighting: as being useful to a certain extent for harassing the enemies' outposts, but not to be counted upon for any regular work, and so omitted them altogether in the orders assigning the positions to be occupied. The corps therefore considered it a feather in their caps to be assigned a position by the side of the regulars. The fires of the troops were still burning, and the men were soon at work cooking their breakfast, one company being thrown out in the front of the village.

The houses all bore signs of the strife. Some were almost unroofed, others had yawning holes in the walls, the work of shell from the Prussian field-guns, while all were pitted with scars of bullets on the side facing the enemy. Scarce a pane of glass remained intact. The floors had been torn up for firing and the furniture had shared the same fate. A breastwork had been thrown up some fifty yards in front of the village and the houses had been connected by earthen walls, so that if the outwork were taken the place could be defended until reinforcements came up.

A hundred yards to the left there was a battery of six guns, and another on a mound four or five hundred yards to the right. In the daytime their fire covered the village, and there was little chance of the Germans attempting an attack until after nightfall. The enemy occupied in force a village of some size five hundred yards away, and had covered it with strong earthworks. Their outposts faced those of the French with an interval of some two hundred yards between them. The sentries on duty were stationed at distances varying from ten to twenty paces apart, behind walls or banks of earth. The enemies' outposts were similarly protected.

Shots were exchanged at intervals throughout the day between French batteries on the right and left and a redoubt the

Germans had thrown up on a rise four or five hundred yards behind their village; the gunners on both sides occasionally directing their fire upon the houses; the outposts were for the most part silent, as it was seldom indeed that even a momentary glimpse was obtained of helmet or kepi, and the orders were that there was to be no useless firing.

During the day the companies took turn at outpost duty, but when night fell the line was strengthened, half the men being under rifles, while the rest lay down with their arms by their side, ready to fall in at a moment's notice. A dropping fire was kept up on both sides, but this was rather for the purpose of showing that they were on the alert than with any idea of harming the invisible foe.

At ten o'clock Cuthbert went out with the half-company to which he belonged, to relieve their comrades who had been for the last three hours in the front line. They had been some little time on duty when Pierre Leroux, who was in charge of the half-company, said to Des Valles, who commanded the whole of the outposts—

"It seems to me that I can hear a deep sound; it comes in pulsations, and I think it is a considerable body of men marching."

The captain listened with bent head for a short time.

"You are right, Pierre, there is certainly a movement of some sort going on in front, but I fancy it is some distance away; if they were marching on the village in front we should hear it more plainly. You had better send out three or four men from your right—let them go some distance along before they attempt to creep forward. The Prussian sentries are too thick along there facing us, but the men might possibly crawl pretty close up to their outposts farther along, they won't be so thick there. Pick four good men, it is a dangerous service. Tell them to get as near as they can to their sentries without being observed, and then to lie and listen attentively. They will have a better chance of hearing there than we have. There is no getting the men to lie perfectly quiet here."

"Can I take three men and go myself with them, Des Valles?"

"Yes, if you like. I will stop with the company until you return."

The lieutenant went along the line, stopping at each man to ask his name. He chose Cuthbert and two men, one from each of the principal art schools, as he thought it might look like favoritism if he took all from among his own comrades. The sentries became more and more scattered as he went along, the main body being posted in front of the village. The last few men were warned that he was going forward, and that they were not to fire until he returned. He sent the last man on the line to communicate with the outposts, furnished by the corps occupying the ground farther to the right, that some men were going out to reconnoitre. Then he and his companions cautiously crawled forward.

They were rather more than half-way across the ground, when Cuthbert uttered an exclamation as he came in sudden contact with a figure advancing with similar caution in the opposite direction. It needed not a guttural oath in German to inform him that it was an enemy. Touching as they were, neither could use their arms, and instinctively they grappled with each other as they lay on the ground.

"Look out, Leroux, I have got hold of a German," Cuthbert said in a low voice, while at the same moment his antagonist said something to the same effect in German.

The lieutenant and the other two men leapt to their feet, and as they did so, four or five men sprang up close in front of them.

"Fire!" Leroux exclaimed, and the two men discharged their pieces! Some shots flashed out in front of them but in the darkness none were hit, and in a moment they were engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with their foes.

In the meantime Cuthbert and his antagonist were rolling over and over, locked closely in each other's arms. Seizing a moment when he came uppermost, Cuthbert steadied himself, relaxed his hold of his opponent, and, half-kneeling, managed

to free himself from his embrace, and gripped him by the throat.

The fight between the others was a short one. The lieutenant had run one of his opponents through the body, but a German had equalized matters by bringing the butt of his musket down on the head of one of the Franc-tireurs, and being now but two against four, Pierre called to the other to retreat. The Germans followed a few yards and then halted. As they passed him Cuthbert gave a final squeeze to his antagonist's throat, and, feeling sure that he would not be able to speak for some time, he crept away for a few yards and lay still among the cabbages that covered the field.

"Where is the sergeant?" one of the Germans said, in a low voice, as they retraced their steps; "he must have been somewhere here when he called."

After two or three minutes' search they came upon him.

"He is alive," one of them said, stooping over him, "he is gasping for breath. I think he is dying, but, anyhow, we may as well carry him in."

They lifted the man, and as they did so several shots rang out from the French outposts. As soon as they had gone on Cuthbert sat up to listen. He could hear now the heavy tread of men who were, it seemed to him, crossing from the right towards the German village. He listened for a minute or two to assure himself that he was not mistaken, and then crawled back towards his own outposts.

"Don't fire," he said, when he knew that he must be near to them, "I am one of those who went out just now."

"Don't fire," he heard a voice he knew to be the lieutenant's repeat, "It is Hartington. I was afraid he was done for." A minute later he joined him.

At this moment a sharp fire broke out from the German lines, showing that their party had also returned to their outposts.

"You will find Des Valles farther along, Hartington; if you have anything to report you had better go to him at once, you can tell me afterwards how you escaped. I had quite given you up."

"I suppose I had better go to him," Cuthbert said, "but I have not much to report except that there is no doubt the noise we heard was caused by a heavy column of men marching into the village over there."

Cuthbert found the captain and made his report.

"Thank you, Hartington. We were pretty well convinced it was so, for even before the firing between your party and the Germans began, the sound was loud enough to be clearly distinguished. I suppose you can give no guess at their numbers?"

"They were a strong body, but how strong I could not tell. A hundred Prussians marching will make as much noise as five hundred Frenchmen, but even allowing for that I should think there will be at least one strong battalion, perhaps more."

"If that is the case we must be on the lookout. Of course they may fancy we mean to attack them, but on the other hand they may intend to push forward. I will go with you to the colonel; he ought to know what you think about it. He was along here a few minutes ago, but the noise was not so plain then, and we did not estimate the force to be anything like as strong as it is in your opinion."

Cuthbert made his report to the colonel, and the latter at once went forward with Des Valles to the outposts, after giving orders for the men in the houses to fall in at once and be ready either to advance to support the front line, or to man the barricades and houses and cover their retreat. Reaching the outposts the sound of marching was no longer heard, but there was a faint continuous murmur which could be plainly made out in the intervals of the fire kept up by the enemy.

"What do you think it is, Des Valles?" the colonel asked, after listening some time.

"I should say, sir, that the column has broken up in the village, and the men are making their way to the front in open order. If I were to suggest, Colonel, I should say it would be as well to send off men to the two batteries to tell them that the enemy are mustering in force in the village opposite to us and that we expect to be attacked, and also to the officers commanding the troops on either side of us."

Four men were at once despatched, and ten minutes later the batteries almost simultaneously opened fire on the village. As if it had been a signal a crashing volley was fired from the line held by the German outposts.

"Here they come!" the colonel shouted, "steady, men, wait till you see them; then open fire upon them as quickly as you can load, but aim steadily. Captain Des Valles, will you warn the line to the left that they are, when the word is given, to retreat at the double, bearing away first to the left so as to clear the ground for the fire from the houses. As soon as they are abreast of them they are to enter at the rear and aid in the defence. Captain Rainault, will you take similar orders away to the right? Ah, here they are."

As he spoke a storm of musketry broke out all along the line as a dark mass could be seen approaching. But the enemy were too strong to be resisted, and in a few seconds the colonel shouted the orders to retreat. Then at the top of their speed the Franc-tireurs ran back, and the instant they cleared off from the front of the houses the colonel shouted to the officer in command there to open fire.

In half a minute the Franc-tireurs were in the enclosure. Each company had already had its position in case of attack assigned to it. For a short time only those on the side facing the enemy were engaged, but the Prussians speedily overlapped the position and attacked it on all sides. Several times they rushed up close to the barricades, but the fire was so hot that they were compelled to fall back again. The circle of fire afforded the gunners in the battery sufficient indication as to the position of the defenders, and their shell fell rapidly both in front and behind it.

The fight had lasted but a few minutes when a crashing volley was fired from the left. The attack on the houses at once slackened, as the Prussians turned to oppose the reinforcements that had come up; but when, shortly afterwards, the regiment from the other side also reached the scene of action their commander felt the surprise had failed, and the Prussians retired to their former position, and the affair was over. Four

companies of the line were left to strengthen the position should the enemy try another attack before daybreak, and then, after congratulating the colonel of the Franc-tireurs on the vigilance that had prevented his being taken by surprise, and the sturdy defence he had made, the officers of the line withdrew their men to the positions they had before occupied.

The loss of the Franc-tireurs was small. The volley that had preceded the attack had done no execution whatever, and as they had fought in shelter they had lost but eight men killed and a score wounded. It was the sharpest affair in which they had as yet been engaged, and the old colonel was highly pleased with the result. After the outpost had resumed their former position Cuthbert related to his comrades the particulars of his struggle with the Prussian sergeant.

"We were pretty well matched," he said, "and I suppose were equally surprised when we found each other grappling in the dark. Of course neither of us knew how many supporters the other had close at hand, but the first thought that struck me was that I must silence him if possible before his comrades came to his assistance. I was only afraid that I should not be able to shake myself free from his grip so as to get to his throat, but fortunately he relaxed his hold the moment he felt that I had loosened mine, and as I was on the top of him the rest was easy."

"Well, you got well out of it anyhow, Hartington," Pierre said. "You did not see anything of the man who was knocked down by a musket, did you?"

"No, it did not occur to me to look for him, but if you like I will go out with you and bring him in."

"That is a very good idea, Hartington, probably he was only stunned. I will go and get leave for us to do so."

However, just as he turned to go a call was heard in front, and a minute later the man came in.

"He had," he said, when he recovered consciousness, "heard a tremendous fire going on, and as soon as he could collect his thoughts became assured that the enemy must be attacking the village. He therefore concluded that the best thing was to lie

still, which he did until the fire ceased and he could hear the Prussians retreating. Then he had crawled in until close to the line of outposts."

"I am heartily glad to see you back again," Pierre said, shaking him by the hand. "It would always have been a subject of regret to me if the expedition that I proposed had lost you your life. As to those who fell in defence of the village I have no personal responsibility, but I should certainly have felt that your death always lay at my door."

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER month and a great change had come over Paris. The spirit of empty gasconnade had been succeeded by one more befitting the time and circumstances. As the hopes of assistance from without lessened, the spirit of resistance grew stronger and firmer. There was no longer any talk of sweeping the Prussians out of France, no longer was it an article of faith that Paris would be saved; but the thought of surrender was farther than ever from men's minds. Paris would resist to the last. She would give time to France to reorganize herself, and would set such an example of devotion and patience under suffering, that when at last famine forced her to surrender, the world should at least say that Paris had proved herself worthy of her reputation.

The defences had been strengthened to an enormous extent; the outlying forts which, when the siege began, could have been carried without much difficulty by a resolute attack, had now been rendered practically impregnable, their approaches had been thickly mined, obstacles of all sorts erected round them, and the casements, barracks, and magazines protected by coverings of trunks of trees and so great a depth of earth as to be able to defy the heaviest shell.

The walls of the *enciente* had been repaired and greatly strengthened, and covered by bastions and other works, so that even were one of the forts taken the work of the enemy

would but be begun. The theatres had been closed from the first. The cafés chantants, and the open-air concerts had long since followed the example, partly because of the increasing seriousness of the temper of the people, partly because of the failure of the gas. The cafés themselves were no longer crowded until midnight; the dim lights of the lamps that had taken the place of gas gave a sombre air to these establishments, and by eight o'clock in the evening most of them put up their shutters.

The National Guard were being reorganized. From each battalion, three or four hundred of the most able-bodied, for the most part unmarried, men, had by order of the Government, been selected and formed into companies for service in the field, and these promised in a short time to develop into troops equal in physique and spirit to the mobiles, and vastly superior to the line.

Ladies no longer appeared in the streets in rich dresses. It was felt that these were out of place now, and all adornments had been rigidly given up, and the women of the better class set the example of dressing in the simplest of costumes and the quietest of colors. Great numbers had devoted themselves to the services of the hospitals and ambulances, and spent the whole of their time in ministering to the sick and wounded.

As yet there was little real suffering in Paris, and the privations and inconveniences were borne uncomplainingly, and even cheerfully. Beef had become almost unobtainable, but it was agreed that horse-flesh was not a bad substitute; cats and dogs were fast disappearing from the streets, and their flesh, prepared in a variety of ways, took the place on the cards of the restaurants of hares and game, and the change was hardly noticed.

Cuthbert was working hard. The school was now definitely closed, but those who liked to do so were free to work there when they chose. M. Goudé had taken advantage of the cessation of lessons to paint on his own account, and was engaged upon a large canvas which he announced was intended for the Salon.

"All this," he said, "has wiped away old quarrels. If I were fit for it I would do as so many of the artists of Paris have done—take my place in the ranks—but I am past the age for marching and sleeping in ditches; but I can entertain no further anger against men who are fighting for France. It is the duty of those who cannot fight to paint. When the Salon opens we must show the world that, in spite of these barbarians, France still holds her head high, and is at the head of civilization."

Cuthbert, however, was not among the number of those who used the painting-room. He had chosen his lodging so as to have a north light, and kept his door closed from early morning until the light faded. An ardor for work had seized him, and it was with reluctance that he put aside his brush when the day's work was over. He was engaged upon two pictures, and worked upon them alternately as the mood seized him. When he had done for the day the canvas was always covered up and the easels placed behind a screen in the corner of the room and the doors opened to his friends.

Once a week for two days, when the corps marched out to take its turn at outpost work, the work was laid by. Between the regular troops on either side there was but an occasional exchange of shots, except when one or the other side attempted to advance its position, but this was seldom, for every post of advantage and every village was now so strongly fortified as to defy capture except by a large force.

The Germans had recognized already that Paris was not to be taken by force, at the cost except of a tremendous expenditure of life, therefore, they were content to close every avenue of escape and to leave it to famine to do the work for them. The French on their side felt that minor operations to enlarge their boundary somewhat, were but a vain effort, and reserved themselves for a great attempt to break through the line. The Franc-tireurs, however, were ever active. They kept up an increasing fusilade upon the Prussian outposts night and day, keeping them in a state of perpetual irritation and watchfulness.

Except when on this service, Cuthbert saw but little of Arnold

Dampierre. The latter had entirely given up painting and was seldom at his lodgings; nor when at home did he join in the smoking-parties at one or other of the student's rooms. Other luxuries had given out, but tobacco was still fairly cheap and its solace made up for many privations. Nor was Arnold's absence regretted. He had never been popular, and on the few occasions when he appeared among them, he was so moody and taciturn that his absence was felt as a relief. When on duty with the corps, however, he was always in good spirits. He seemed to delight in action and was ever ready to volunteer for any dangerous work, such as crawling up close to the German outposts to ascertain their precise positions. He had so many narrow escapes that his comrades declared that he held a charmed life against Prussian bullets.

"The American would be a pleasant fellow if we were always under arms," Pierre Leroux said one evening; "he is not the same man directly we get outside the walls—he is cheerful, good-tempered, and full of ardor—here he is a bear. He will get into trouble if he does not mind. I was this afternoon opposite the Hôtel de Ville. There were many of the unwashed denouncing the Government and its ways to all who would listen to them. Dampierre was standing in one of the groups where a man, whom I knew to be Minette's father, for he came to the studio one day to say that she was unwell and could not come, was addressing them. He was pouring out threats against the bourgeois, against the Government, against every one in fact. He said that at present the true patriots, the working-men of Paris, were disarmed, but even had they arms, they would not imperil the defence of Paris by civil war; but that as soon as the accursed Germans had turned their backs, their day would come, and the true principles of the Republic, the principles of '79, would then be triumphant, and France would be free of the incubus of the selfish capitalists who ground down the people. I could see that Dampierre thoroughly sympathized with the fellow, and I believe that if there is trouble he is capable of putting on a red cap and marching with the scum of Belleville.

"It is not Minette's father, but Minette, who has converted him. I saw her marching at the head of one of the Belleville battalions the other day, dressed as a cantinière, and carrying herself with the air of a young Amazon."

"That girl is capable of anything," Cuthbert said; "I have always said that she was a small sleeping volcano, and if there are barricades I can fancy her standing on the top of one of them and waving a red flag, however thickly the bullets might be whistling around. I went as far as I could in the way of warning Dampierre in the early days, but I soon saw that if we were to continue on terms of amity I must drop it. It is an infatuation and a most unfortunate one, but it must run its course. Dampierre is a gentleman, and although at present he may be carried away by the enthusiasm of these people, I fancy that if they should happen, which, God forbid, to get the upper hand, he would soon be shocked when they proceeded to carry their theories into execution. As to Minette, if he is ever mad enough to marry her, the best thing would be to do so as soon as Paris is open and to take her straight away to New Orleans.

"She is a born actress, and is as clever as she is pretty, and I have no doubt she would have the good sense to play the part of a grande dame admirably, and would soon become a leader of French society there; but I should be sorry to predict how long it would last and what would come after it, and I believe in my heart that the best thing that could happen for him would be to be knocked over by a Prussian bullet. But after all the thing may never come off. A girl like Minette must have lovers in her own class. I have no doubt she is fond of Dampierre at present, but no one can say how long it will last. I can imagine that she is proud of her conquest. He is good-looking, a gentleman, and rich. No doubt she is envied in her quarter, and besides it must be a gratification to her to have induced or fascinated him into casting in his lot with the reds, but all that will pall in time. If I were in his place I should never feel sure of her until I had placed the ring on her finger."

"That is the time when I should begin not to feel sure of her," René laughed, "my anxieties would begin then. She is as changeable as an April sky. She could love passionately for a time, but for how long I should be sorry to guess. You see her in the studio, she is delighted with every fresh dress and fresh pose. Never was there so good a model for a few days, then she gets tired of it, and wants something fresh. She is like a child with a new doll; for a bit she will be wild over it; she cannot sleep without it, she takes it with her everywhere, she adores it, but will it soon be thrown by, and perhaps she will be battering its head with a stick. When Minette first came to the studio I was mad about her, now I would as soon have a tiger-cat for a mistress."

"That is too severe, René," a young man who had joined the studio but three months before, expostulated. "She seemed to me a charming young woman. I cannot understand what you and Cuthbert are talking of her in this way for."

René laughed.

"Ah, you haven't got over the first stage yet, and many of the others will agree with you. We all like her, you know, we are all glad to have her with us; she is like a glass of champagne, and we cannot say anything against her in that quality. It is only when one comes to talk about her as a wife that one is frightened."

"I believe all this is on account of her standing last month as Judith about to kill Holofernes."

"Perhaps you are right, Clement. I admit that was a revelation to me. I used to laugh at Cuthbert, who declared she frightened him, but I felt then he was right. Good heavens, what a Judith she was; it was enough to make one shiver to see the look of hate, of triumph and of vengeance in her face. One knew that one blow would do it; that his head would be severed by that heavy knife she held as surely as a Maître d'Armes would cut a dead sheep in two."

"It was only a piece of acting, René. You might as well say that a tragedienne would be capable of carrying out a tragedy in her own family."

"Perhaps so, Clement, but then you see it would never occur to me to marry a tragedienne. I should imagine that she would ask for the salt in the same tone that she would demand poison. I grant it was acting, but there was a terrific truth about it that showed that she was at least able to picture the position and feel it. I tried to sketch her, but I gave it up as hopeless. It was beyond me altogether. I observed that all the others failed, too, except Cuthbert here. He dashed it off in his note-book, and if he ever paints it, I would not have it hung up in my bedroom for a thousand francs, for I should never dare to go to sleep with it looking at me. But, indeed, of late, Minette has changed a good deal; the little fool is carried away by all this talk up at Belleville, and takes it quite seriously. You remember she has refused our last three invitations, and she said quite superbly when I asked her the last time, 'This is no time for feasting and enjoyment, M. René, when Paris is besieged and thousands are starving.'"

"Then I don't know where they are," Pierre said. "Belleville was never so well off as it is to-day; every man gets a franc and a half a day for wearing a kepi and going for a few hours once a week on duty on the wall. His wife gets something, and they have so much for each child. They have no work to do, and I am told that, although six francs a day are offered by the Government for laborers, they cannot get enough men. The fellows enjoy smoking, lounging, talking, and doing nothing too much to be tempted by any offer. There may be starvation before we have done; but at any rate there is none at present, for every man, woman, and child draws their ration of meat, not a large one, but enough to get on with; beside bread is not very dear, and there is no lack of vegetables, brought in every day from beyond the forts."

"I said as much to Minette, Pierre, but she only muttered that working-men would not always exist on charity, and the time would come when there would be plenty for all. We shall have trouble with them before we have done I expect, what do you think, Henri?"

The lieutenant took his pipe out of his mouth and nodded.

"There will be trouble," he said. "I have been up to Belleville several times. This spell of idleness is doing much harm. As soon as we have done with the Prussians we shall have the reds on our hands."

"We are seven to one against them," René said, contemptuously. "The voting the other day showed that."

"Ah, but the seventh know what they want. They want to be masters. They want money enough to keep them without work. They want to set the streets flowing with blood. The other six only want to be left alone. They have no idea of risking their lives, and you will see, when it begins, they will hold the butts of their muskets up; they will say, 'Don't let us irritate these demons,' and each man will hope that, even if others are robbed, he will somehow escape.

"You cannot rely on the National Guard, it is no use to count them in, and the mobiles only want to be off to their villages. If the troops had a leader they might fight, but who is to lead them? Trochu is an imbecile, the real fighting army is in the prisons of Germany, and when it is released will not care to embark in another war. I think things look bad."

"What should we do?" Pierre asked.

"We should paint," Henri said, "that is to say we should paint if things go as I think they will, and the National Guard refuse to fight. If the men who have something to lose won't lift an arm to defend it, why should we who have nothing at stake?"

"You might paint, but who is going to buy your pictures. Henri?" Cuthbert said, quietly. "As soon as the reds get the upper hand we shall have the guillotine at work, and the first heads to fall will be those of your best customers. You don't suppose the ruffians of Belleville are going to become patrons of art. For my part I would rather fight against the savages than level my rifle against the honest German lads who are led here against us. I should think no more of shooting one of these roughs than of killing a tiger—indeed, I regard the tiger as the more honest beast of the two. Still, if you Frenchmen like to be ruled over by King Mob, it is no business of mine.

Thank God, such a thing is never likely to happen in England —at any rate in my time. In the first place, we can trust our troops, and in the second, we could trust ourselves. Were there not a soldier in the land, such a thing will never happen. Our workmen have sense enough to know that a mob-rule would be ruin to them as well as to the rich, and, were it needed, in twenty-four hours half a million men could be sworn in as constables, and these would sweep the rabble into the Thames."

"Your rabble would be unarmed; ours have at present all got muskets."

"More fools they who gave them to them, but what can one expect from such a Government. There is not among them a single practical man except Gambetta, and he is away at Tours. It is a Government of lawyers and spouters; of words they give us plenty, of goverment nothing. I would rather, infinitely rather, that the women at the Halles should chose a dozen of the most capable women among them and establish them as the Government. I will guarantee you would see a change for the better before twenty-four hours were over. I doubt if you could see a change for the worse. Jules Fauvre with his ridiculous phrase, not one foot of our territory, not one stone of our fortresses, is no better than a mountebank, and the others are as bad. Would that either Ducrot or Vinoy had the firmness and half the talent of a Napoleon. They would march the troops in, sweep away this gathering of imbeciles, establish martial law, disarm Belleville and Montmartre, shoot Floureus, Pyat, Blanqui, and a hundred of the most noxious of these vermin; forbid all assemblages, turn the National Guards into soldiers, and after rendering Paris impotent for mischief turn their attention to the Germans. The one thing that can save Paris to my mind is a military dictator, but I see no sign of such a man being forthcoming."

"Bravo! bravo!" several of the students shouted, "what a pity it is that you are an Englishman, Cuthbert. You would be just the man for us otherwise."

"At any rate, I should do something and not let everything drift," Cuthbert retorted, joining in the laugh at his own un-

accustomed vehemence; "but there, we have broken our agreement, now let us revert to art;" but the effort was vain, the talk soon drifted back again to the siege, and many were the conjectures as to what Trochu's famous plan could be and which point offered the most hopeful chance for the army to pierce the German cordon.

Mary Brander had a fortnight before enrolled herself among the nurses at the American ambulance, which was doing admirable work, and was admitted by the French themselves to be a model which could be followed with great advantage in their own hospitals. Here everything was neat, clean, and well arranged. The wounded were lodged in tents which were well ventilated and yet warm. The surgeons and some of the nurses were also under canvas, while others, among whom was Mary Brander, went back to their homes when their turn of duty was over. They had, like the ladies who worked in the French hospitals, adopted a sort of uniform and wore the white badge with the red cross on their arms. With this they could go unquestioned, and free from impertinent remarks through the thickest crowds, everyone making way for them with respectful civility.

"It is terrible," she said to Cuthbert, upon his calling one evening when she was off duty, "and yet I do not feel it so trying as listening to the silly talk and seeing the follies of the people in the streets. The poor fellows bear their sufferings so patiently, they are so grateful for every little thing done for them, that one cannot but feel how much there is likable among the French in spite of their follies. I talk to them a good deal and it is almost always about their homes and their families, especially their mothers. Sometimes it is their sweethearts or their sisters. With mobiles and linesmen it is just the same. Sometimes I write letters for them—such simple, touching letters as they are, it is difficult not to cry as they dictate, what are, in many cases, last farewells. They always want those at home to know that they have died doing their duty, but beyond that they don't say much of themselves. It is of those to whom they are writing that they think. They tell them to cheer up.

They bid younger brothers take their place. Besides the letters which will be photographed and sent off by pigeon post, I have a pile of little packets to be despatched when Paris is open—locks of hair, photographs, Bibles, and keepsakes of all kinds."

"I think at any rate, Mary, you have at present discovered one branch at least of woman's mission upon which we cannot quarrel. We grant not only your equality but your superiority to us as nurses."

Mary Brander smiled faintly, but ignored the opening for argument.

"Some of them are dreadfully wounded," she went on, her thoughts reverting to the hospital. "It is terrible to think that when the great battle everyone seems looking forward to takes place, there may be thousands of wounded to be cared for. When do you think it will be?"

"Soon; of course no one can say when, but I don't see anything to gain from waiting longer. The mobiles are as good as they are likely to be made. One can't call the line disciplined, according to the English ideas of discipline, but they are better than they were, and at any rate all are anxious for something to be done."

"Do you think they will get through?"

He shook his head.

"If they could fall suddenly upon the Germans they might do so, but it is no easy matter to move large bodies of men quickly, and to be successful they ought to be able to hurl themselves against the Germans before they have time to concentrate. I have no doubt whichever side we issue out on, we shall get on fairly enough as long as we have the assistance of the guns of the forts; but beyond that I don't think we shall get. The Germans must by this time know the country vastly better than we do. They are immensely better trained in making extensive movements. They have excellent generals and good officers. I fancy it will be the same thing that it has been before. We shall make an advance, we shall push the enemy back for a bit, we shall occupy positions, and the next day the Germans will retake them. We have no method and no commissariat. Even

now bodies of troops are outside the walls frequently four-and-twenty hours without food. In the confusion consequent on a battle matters will be ten times worse. In the morning the troops will be half-starved and half-frozen, and there will be very little fight left in them."

"What would you do if you were commander-in-chief, Cuthbert?"

"I am altogether unfit to make a plan, and still more unfit to carry it out," he said, "but my idea would certainly be to attack somewhere with half my force, to force the enemy back, and to hold positions at the end of the day, so that the Germans would concentrate to attack in the morning. At night I would withdraw the greater portion of them, march them straight across Paris; the other half of the army would attack there at daybreak, and would be reinforced soon after the fighting began by those who had fought the day before. I think in that way they ought to be able to cut their way out, but what they would do when they once get out is more than I can tell you. They have no cavalry to speak of, while the Germans have a splendid cavalry force who would harass them continually. The infantry would pursue and would march infinitely better than we should do. We should scatter to get food, whole regiments would break up and become masses of fugitives, and finally we should be surrounded, either cut to pieces or forced to surrender. Of two things, I am not sure that it would not be best for us to be handsomely thrashed on the first day of our sortie."

"You take a very gloomy view of things," she said, almost angrily.

"Why, I should have thought you would be pleased. I am prophesying success for your friends, the Germans."

"I don't know why you should always insist that they are my friends. I was of opinion that they were right at first, and am so still, but I think they now are behaving hardly and cruelly; at least I think Bismarck is. It was heartless for him to insist, as a condition of the armistice, that Paris should not be revictualled while it lasted. Of course they could not agree to that, though they would have agreed to anything like fair

conditions. Everyone really wanted peace, and if the Germans hadn't insisted on those terms, peace would have been made. So things have changed altogether, and it is clear that not the Germans, but their leaders, want to injure and humiliate France to the utmost. They were not content with their pound of flesh, but they want to destroy France altogether. I despised these people at first, but I don't despise them now. At least they are wonderfully patient, and though they know what they will have to suffer when everything is eaten up, no one has said a word in favor of surrender, since Bismarck showed how determined he was to humiliate them."

"I think I shall win my bet after all, Mary."

"I am not so sure as I was that you won't. I didn't think I could ever have eaten horse-flesh, but it is really not so bad. Monsieur Michaud told us, yesterday, that he dined out with some friends and had had both cat and rat. Of course they were disguised with sauces, but the people made no secret of what they were, and he said they were really very nice. I don't think I could try them, but I don't feel as certain as I did; anyhow, we haven't begun to touch our stores, and there is no talk of confiscating everything yet."

CHAPTER XI.

Two men were sitting in a cabaret near the Halles. One was dressed in the uniform of a sergeant of the National Guard. He was a powerfully-built man, with a black beard and a mustache, and a rough crop of hair that stuck out aggressively beneath his kepi. The other was some fifteen years younger; beyond the cap he wore no military uniform. He had a mustache only, and was a good-looking young fellow of the Ouvrier class.

"I tell you it is too bad, Père Dufaure. A year ago she pretended she liked me, and the fact that she wore good dresses and was earning lots of money did not seem to make any difference in her. But now all that is changed. That foreigner

has turned her head. She thinks now she is going to be a lady and has thrown me over as if I were dirt, but I won't have it," and he struck his fist upon the table, " those cursed aristocrats are not to have everything their own way."

" Patience, Jean. Women will be women, and the right way to win her back is to have patience and wait. I don't say that just at present her head is not turned with this American, who by the way is a good Republican, and though he has money, has good notions, and holds with us that we have too long been ground down by the bourgeois, still she may tire of him after a while. He is not amusing, this American, and though Minette may like being adored, she likes being amused also. Pooh, pooh, this matter will come all right. Besides, although she likes the American at present, she thinks more of the Commune than of any lover. Have patience and do not quarrel with her. You know that I am on your side. But Minette is a good deal like what her mother was. Ah, these women! A man can do nothing with them when they make up their minds to have their own way. What can I say to her? I can not threaten to turn her out of the house for everything in it is hers. It is she who earns the money. She is too old to be beaten, and if it comes to scolding, her tongue runs faster than mine does, and you know besides she has a temper."

Jean nodded.

" She is worse than a wild-cat when her back is up," he said. " Why, when this thing first began, and I told her to beware how she went on with this American, for that I would kill him if he came in my way, she caught up a knife, and if I had not run like a rabbit, she would have stuck me, and you know how she went on, and drove me out of Montmartre. After that affair I have not dared see her."

" Why not let her go? and take to someone else, Jean? There are plenty of pretty girls in the quarter who would not say no to the best rising worker in his trade."

" It is no use, Père Dufaure, I have told myself the same a hundred times, but I cannot do it. She has her tempers, what

woman has not ; but at other times who is so bright and gay as she is ? "

" Well, well, Jean, we shall see what we shall see. You don't suppose that if things do not turn out well, as we hope they will do, I should let her carry out this whim of hers, and go off with the American, and leave me to shift for myself. Not such a fool. At present I say nothing. It is always better to hold your tongue as long as you can. I make him welcome when he comes to our house ; we go together to the meetings, and sometimes he speaks, and speaks well, though he does not go far enough for us. Well, no one can say what may happen—he may be shot by the Germans, or he may be shot at the barricades, who knows. At any rate it is best to hold my peace. If I leave things alone, Minette is as likely as not to change her mind again, but if I were to say anything against him—first, we should have a scene ; secondly, she would be more than ever determined on this whim. You must be patient, Jean, and all will come well in the end."

" I am not so sure of that," Jean said, sullenly. " I was as patient as I could be, but no good came of it ; then, as you know, I tried to get rid of him, but failed, and had to move away, but one thing is certain, if I don't marry her he never shall. However, I can wait."

" That is all right, Jean ; wait till our little affairs come off and the bourgeois are under our feet. There will be good posts for true citizens then, and I will see that you have one, and it will be time to talk about marriages when everything is going on well. When we once get the Germans out of the way, we shall see what we shall see, Sapristie ! we will make short work of the capitalists, and as for the troops, they will have had enough fighting and will be ready enough to march off and leave us alone."

At the time they were talking, the couple they were speaking of were standing leaning on the parapet of the wall by the river. They met there every evening when there was no assembly of importance to attend.

" I wish it was all over, Minette," he said, " and that we could

leave the city and be off. It would be a different life for you, dear, but I hope a pleasanter one. There would be no cold weather like this, but you can sit all the year round in the veranda without needing wraps. There will be servants to wait on you, and carriages, and everything you can wish for, and when you are disposed there will be society; and as all of our friends speak French, you will soon be quite at home with them. And, what one thinks of a good deal at present, there will be fruits and flowers, and plenty to eat, and no sound of cannon, and no talk of wars. We fought out our war ten years ago."

"It sounds nice, Arnold, very nice, but it will be strange not to work."

"You won't want to work there," he said; "in the day it is so hot that you will be glad to sit indoors in a darkened room and do nothing. I shall paint a good deal, and when you have the fancy, you can sit as my model again."

"And is it a large city, Arnold? It seems to me now that I could not live in the country, I should soon get dreadfully tired of it."

"It is a large city," he said, "though, of course, not so large as Paris. There are theatres there and amusements of all sorts."

"I should be content with you, Arnold. It does not seem to me that I could want anything else, but after all this excitement it will seem strange to have nothing to do."

"I shall be glad to be out of it," he said. "Your father and the others are quite right—the rich have too much and the poor too little. The manufacturers gain fortunes, and the men whose work enriches them remain poor all their lives. Still I fear that they will go too far, and that troubles me."

She made a quick movement as if about to speak, but checked herself for a moment, and then said, quietly—

"You know the proverb, Arnold, 'One cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs.'"

"That is true," he said, "as to an omelette, but a change of Government can be carried out without costing life, that is unless there is resistance, and I hope there will be none here.

The incapables over there will slink away. Why, Flourens and a few hundred men were enough to snatch the government out of their feeble hands. If the people declare that they will govern themselves, who is to withstand them. I hope to see the triumph and then to go. You know I am not a coward, Minette ; our corps have shown that they can fight, but I long for my quiet home again, with its gardens and flowers, and balmy air, and I like handling a paint-brush much better than a rifle, and above all to see you mistress of my home, but I know there is a good deal to go through first. Trochu's plans may be carried out any day."

"Ah ! Those Prussians !" she exclaimed, in a tone of the deepest hate, with a gesture of defiance towards Versailles. "They will dare to fire at you !"

"Yes, I imagine they will do that, Minette," he said with a laugh, "and pretty hotly, too."

"Well, if they kill you," she said, passionately, "I will avenge you. I will go out through the outposts and will find my way to Versailles, and I will kill William or Bismarck. They may kill me afterwards, I care nothing for that. Charlotte Corday was a reactionist, but she slew Marat and died calmly and bravely. I could do as much and would to revenge you."

"I hope you would not attempt anything so mad, Minette. Of course, I must take my chance as everyone else will do, and the Prussians will be no more to blame if one of their bullets killed me than if it had struck anyone else. Everyone who goes into a battle has to run his chances. I had an elder brother killed in the civil war we had in the States. I have no great love for the North, but I do not blame them especially for the death of my brother. There were a great number killed on both sides, and that he should be among them was the fortune of war. But it is bitterly cold, Minette ; let us be walking. I am glad we are not on outpost duty to-night. I put on so many flannel shirts that I can hardly button my tunic over them, but in spite of that it is cold work standing with one's hands on one's trigger looking out into the darkness. It is quite a relief when a rifle rings out either from our side or the

other. Then for a bit everyone is alive and active, we think the Prussians are advancing, and they think we are, and we both blaze away merrily for a bit. Then there is a lull again, and perhaps an hour or two of dreary waiting till there is a fresh alarm. As soon as we are relieved, we hurry off to our quarter, where there is sure to be a fire blazing. Then we heat up the coffee in our canteens, pouring in a little spirits, and are soon warm again."

"I cannot see why they don't form corps of women, Arnold; we have just as much at stake as the men have, and I am sure we should be quite as brave as the most of them, a great deal braver than the National Guard."

"I have no doubt you would, dear, but it will be quite time for you to fight when all the men are used up. What the women ought to do is to drive the men outside the walls. If the women were to arm themselves with mops soaked in dirty water, and were to attack every man under forty they found lurking in the streets, they would soon make a change in things. You should begin in your own quarter first, for although they are always denouncing the bourgeois for not fighting, I cannot see that there is any more eagerness to go out at Montmartre than there is in the quarter of the Bank—in fact, a great deal less."

"Why should the ouvriers fight with the Germans, Arnold—to them it matters little whether Paris is taken by the Germans or not—it is not they whose houses will be sacked, it is not they who will have to pay the indemnity."

"No, but at least they are Frenchmen. They can talk enough about the honor of France, but it is little they do to preserve it. They shout, 'the Prussians must be destroyed,' and then go off quietly to their cabarets to smoke and drink. I do not admire the bourgeois, but I do not see anything more admirable among the ouvriers. They talk grandly but they do nothing. There is no difficulty in getting volunteers for the war companies among the National Guard of the centre, though to them the extra pay is nothing; but at Belleville and Montmartre the war companies don't fill up. They rail at the bourgeois but when it comes to

fighting outside the walls I will wager that the shopkeepers show the most courage."

"They will fight when there is anything to fight for," she said, confidently, "but they don't care to waste their time on the walls when there is nothing to do, and the Germans are miles away."

"Well, we shall see," he replied, grimly. "Anyhow, I wish it were all over, and that we were on our way home. You have never seen a ship yet, Minette. You will be astonished when you go on board one of the great liners," and as they walked along the Boulevards he told her of the floating palaces, in one of which they were to cross the ocean, and forgetting for a time the questions that absorbed her, she listened with the interest of a child hearing a fairy-tale. When they neared Montmartre they separated, for Minette would never walk with him in her own quarter.

The next morning, November 28th, the order was issued that the gates were to be closed and that no one was to be allowed to pass out under any pretext whatever. No one doubted that the long-expected sally was to be carried out. Bodies of troops marched through the streets, trains of wagons with munitions of war moved in the same direction, and in an hour all Paris knew that the sortie was to take place somewhere across the loop formed by the Marne.

"It is for to-morrow," Pierre Leroux exclaimed, running into Cuthbert's room, "we are to parade at daybreak. The gates are shut, and troops are moving about everywhere."

"All right, Pierre; we have been looking for it for so long, that it comes almost as a surprise at last."

Cuthbert got up, made himself a cup of coffee, drank it with a piece of dry bread, and then sallied out. Mary would be on duty at ten o'clock. He knew the road she took on her way to the hospital and should meet her. In half an hour he saw the trim figure in the dark dress, and the white band round the arm.

"I suppose you have heard that we are going to stir up the German nest to-morrow," he said gayly.

"Yes, I have heard," she said, sadly, "it is very dreadful."

"It is what we have been waiting for and longing for for the last two months. We are to be under arms at daybreak, and as you will be at the ambulance for the next twenty-four hours I thought I would make an effort to catch you on the way. I want you to come round to my lodgings."

She looked surprised.

"Of course I will come," she said frankly, "but what do you want me to do that for?"

"Well, there is no saying as to who will come back again to-morrow, Mary, and I want you to see my two pictures. I have been working at them for the last two months steadily. They are not quite finished yet, but another week would have been enough for the finishing touches, but I don't suppose you will miss them. Nobody has seen them yet, and nobody would have seen them till they were quite ready, but as it is possible they never may be finished I should like you to see them now. I am not taking you up under any false pretences," he said, lightly, "nor to try again to get you to change your mission. I only want you to see that I have been working honestly. I could see when I have spoken of my painting there was always a little incredulity in the way in which you listened to me. You had so completely made up your mind that I should never be earnest about anything that you could not bring yourself to believe that I wasn't amusing myself with art here, just as I did in London. I had intended to have brought them triumphantly in a fiacre to your place, when they were finished, and I can't deny myself the pleasure of disabusing your mind. It is not far out of your way, and if we walk fast you can still arrive at your ambulance in time. If there were any fiacres about I would call one, but they have quite disappeared. In the first place, because no one is rich enough to be able to pay for such luxuries, and in the second, because most of the horses have been turned to other uses."

She did not seem to pay very much attention to what he was saying, but broke in with the question—

"Do you think there will be much fighting?"

"It would be folly to try to persuade you that there won't."

he said. "When there are so many thousand men with guns and cannon who are determined to get out of a place, and an equal number of men with guns and cannon just as determined to keep them in, the chances are that, as the Irish say, there will be wigs on the green. I do not suppose the loss will be great in comparison to the number engaged, because certainly a good many of the French will reconsider their determination to get out, and will be seized with a burning desire to get back as soon as the German shells begin to fall among them, still I do hope that they will make a decent fight of it. I know there are some tremendously strong batteries on the ground enclosed by the loop of the Marne, which is where they say it is going to be, and the forts will be able to help, so that certainly for a time we shall fight with great advantages. I do wish that it was not so cold, fighting is bad enough in summer; but the possibility of lying out all night on the snow wounded is one I very strongly object to."

He continued to talk in the same light strain, until they reached his lodgings, in order to put the girl at her ease.

"So this is your sitting-room," she said, with a laugh that had a tremor in it, "it is just what I supposed it would be, very untidy, very dusty, and yet in its way, comfortable. Where are the pictures?"

"Behind that screen; I keep them in strict seclusion there. Now if you will sit down by the window I will bring the easels out."

She did as he told her. The pictures were covered when he brought them out. He placed them where the light would fall best on them, and then removed the cloths.

"They have not arrived at the glories of frames yet," he said, "but you must make allowances for that. I can assure you they will look much larger and more important when they are in their settings."

The girl sat for a minute without speaking. They were repruductions on a larger scale and with all the improvements that his added skill and experience could introduce of the two he had exhibited to M. Goudé, when he entered the studio.

"I had intended to do battle-pieces," he said, "and have made innumerable sketches, but somehow or other the inspiration did not come in that direction, so I fell back on these which are taken from smaller ones I painted before I left London. Do you like them? You see I hang upon your verdict. You at present represent the public to me."

There were tears standing in the girl's eyes.

"They are beautiful," she said, softly, "very beautiful. I am not a judge of painting, though I have been a good deal in the galleries of Dresden, and I was at Munich too; and I know enough to see they are painted by a real artist. I like the bright one best, the other almost frightens me, it is so sad and hopeless, I think—" and she hesitated, "that girl in the veranda is something like me, though I am sure I never look a bit like that, and I am nothing—nothing like so pretty."

"You never look like that, Miss Brander, because you have never felt as that girl is supposed to be feeling; some day when the time comes that you feel as she does you will look so. That is a woman, a woman who loves. At present that side of your nature has not woke up. The intellectual side of you, if I may so speak, has been forced, and your soul is still asleep. Some day you will admit that the portrait, for I own it to be a portrait, is a life-like one. Now—" he broke off abruptly, "we had better be going or you will be late at your post."

She said no more until they were in the street.

"I have been very wrong," she said suddenly, after walking for some time in silence. "You must have worked hard indeed. I own I never thought that you would. I used to consider your sketches very pretty, but I never thought that you would come to be a great artist."

"I have not come to that yet," he said, "but I do hope that I may come to be a fair one some day—that is if the Germans don't forcibly interfere—but I have worked very hard, and I may tell you that Goudé, who is one of the best judges in Paris, thinks well of me. I will ask you to take care of this," he said, and he took out a blank envelope. "This is my will. A man is a fool who goes into a battle without making provision for

what may happen. When I return you can hand it to me again. If I should not come back please inclose it to your father. He will see that its provisions are carried out. I may say that I have left you the two pictures. You have a right to them, for if it had not been for you I don't suppose they would ever have been painted. I only wish that they had been quite finished."

Mary took the paper without a word, nor did she speak again until they arrived at the ambulance, then she turned and laid her hand in his.

"Good-bye, Mary, I hope I shall ask you for that envelope back again in a couple of days."

"God grant that it may be so," she said, "I shall suffer so till you do."

"Yes, we have always been good friends, haven't we? Now, child, you always used to give me a kiss before I left you then. Mayn't I have one now?"

She held up her face, he kissed her twice, and then turned and strode away.

"I wonder whether she will ever grow to be a woman," he said to himself, bitterly, "and discover that there is a heart as well as brains in her composition. There was no more of doubt or hesitation in the way in which she held up her face to be kissed, than when she did so as a child. Indeed, as a child, I do think she would have cried if I told her at parting that I was going away for good. Well, it is of no use blaming her. She can't help it if she is deficient in the one quality that is of all the most important. Of course she has got it and will know it some day, but at present it is latent and it is evident that I am not the man who has the key of it. She was pleased at my pictures. It was one of her ideas that I ought to do something, and she is pleased to find that I have buckled to work in earnest, just as she would be pleased if Parliament would pass a law giving to women some of the rights which she has taken it into her head they are deprived of. However, perhaps it is better as it is. If anything happens to me to-morrow, she will be sorry for a week or two just as she would if she lost any other

friend, while if Arnold Dampierre goes down Minette will for a time be like a mad woman. At any rate my five thousand will help her to carry out her crusade. I should imagine that she won't get much aid in that direction from her father.

"Halloa, I know that man's face," he broke off as he noticed a well-dressed man turn in at the door of a quiet-looking residence he was just approaching, "I know his face well; he is an Englishman, too, but I can't think where I have seen him." He could not have told himself why he should have given the question a second thought, but the face kept haunting him in spite of the graver matters in his mind, and as he reached the door of his lodgings he stopped suddenly.

"I have it," he exclaimed, "it is Cumming, the manager of the bank, the fellow that ruined it and then absconded. I saw they were looking for him in Spain and South America and a dozen other places, and here he is. By Jove, he is a clever fellow. I suppose he came here as soon as the war broke out, knowing very well that the police would have plenty of other things to think of besides inquiring as to the antecedents of Englishmen who took up their residence here. Of course he has been absolutely safe since the fall of the Empire. The fellow has grown a beard and mustache; that is why I did not recognize him at first. Of course he has taken another name. Well, I don't know that it is any business of mine. He got off with some money, but I don't suppose it was any great sum. At any rate it would not be enough to make any material difference to the creditors of the bank. However, I will think it over later on. There is no hurry about the matter. He is here till the siege is over, and I should certainly like to have a talk with him. I have never been able to get it quite out of my mind that there has been something mysterious about the whole affair as far as my father was concerned, though where the mystery comes in is more than I can imagine. I expect it is simply because I have never liked Brander, and have always had a strong idea that our popular townsman was at bottom a knave as well as a humbug."

Mary Brander went about her work very quietly all day, and

more than one of the wounded patients remarked the change in her manner.

"Mademoiselle is suffering to-day," one of them said to her, as he missed the ring of hopefulness and cheeriness with which she generally spoke to him.

"I am not feeling well, I have a bad headache; and moreover I have friends in the sortie that is to be made to-night."

"Ah, yes, mademoiselle, there must be many sad hearts in Paris. As for me, my spirits have risen since I heard it. At last we are going to begin in earnest and it is time. I only wish I could have been well enough to have taken my share in it. It is tiresome to think that I have been wounded in a trifling skirmish. I should not have minded if it had been to-morrow, so that, when I am an old man, I might tell my grandchildren that I got that scar on the day when we drove the Prussians from the front of Paris. That would have been something to say. Courage, mademoiselle, after all there are twenty who get through these things safely, to every one that is hit, and your friends will be covered with glory."

"I hope that it will be as you think," she said, "but it may be the other way, and that the sortie will fail."

"You must not think that," he said. "We have not had a fair chance before, now we have got one. But even should we not win the first time, we will the second or the third. What, are Frenchmen always to be beaten by these Prussians? They have beaten us of late, because we have been badly led; but there must come another Jena to us one of these days."

Mary nodded and then passed on to the next patient. In the evening the news came that things were not all in readiness, and that the sortie was deferred at least for twenty-four hours.

"You are not well, Miss Brander," the chief surgeon of the hospital said to her soon afterwards, "I have noticed all day that you have been looking fagged and worn out. As it is certain now that we shall have no unusual pressure upon our resources for another thirty-six hours at any rate, I think you had better go home."

"I have a bad headache," she said.

"Yes, I can see that, and your hand is as cold as ice. Go home, child, and have a long night's rest. This sort of work is very trying until one gets hardened to it. Fortunately I have no lack of assistance. If you do not feel better to-morrow morning take another twenty-four hours off duty. You are likely to want all your strength and nerve on Monday if this affair comes off in earnest, which I own I am inclined to doubt, for, so far, there has been no shadow of earnestness about anything since the siege began."

CHAPTER XII.

THE Franc-tireurs des Écoles had marched out beyond the walls when the order came that the affair was postponed, and that they would not be required till the following day, when they were to parade at daybreak. There was much indignation at the change and all sorts of causes were suggested for it. One rumor was to the effect that the pontoon bridges for crossing the river were of insufficient length. Others said that the train of provisions that was to accompany the force after it had cut its way through the Prussians was not ready. One rumor was to the effect that the Prussians had been apprised by spies of Trochu's intentions and had massed heavy bodies of men at the threatened point. The most generally received opinion was that Trochu's object had been only to make a demonstration on this side of Paris, with the object of deceiving the Prussians and inducing them to weaken their lines at other points, and that the real attack would be made in another direction altogether.

"It is a nuisance whichever way it is," Cuthbert said, as, after the corps was dismissed, he walked back with a group of his friends, "it is a mistake too. We had all got ourselves up to boiling heat, and had made up our minds to go through with it, and this delay is like a dash of cold water. Of course it is the same with the rest of the force. One hates being humbugged, and it makes one doubt whether our generals know their business. Well, there is one thing, the delay won't be a

long one; it is eight o'clock now, and as we must be up by six, I shall turn in at once and get a good sleep. Be sure and don't forget your flasks in the morning. The weather gets colder and colder."

The next morning, however, the men were again dismissed after parade, and told they were to fall in again at daybreak next day. There was a feeling of restlessness and disquiet throughout Paris. The town was placarded with proclamations of Trochu and Ducrot. The latter was a sort of valedictory letter to Paris, saying that he was going out to conquer or to die, and that if defeated, he would never return to Paris alive. It was evident by their tone that at the time the proclamations were penned it was intended that the battle should take place on that day, and that the delay was consequent upon a breakdown in the arrangements and was not the result of any fixed plan.

Paris for once was serious. Special services were held in all the churches and these were thronged by citizens and soldiers. Cuthbert went to the building where a few of the English residents attended service throughout the siege. Mary Brander was not present, but as she had said the day before that she would be on duty for twenty-four hours, he had not expected to see her.

In the afternoon he went to a restaurant and dined fairly well, indulging himself in all the luxuries obtainable, and then returned and spent the evening with René and Pierre. The next morning, when he dressed himself for parade, he took the precaution of putting on as many articles of underclothing as he could button his tunic over. This time there was no mistake in the orders, as not a few of those who fell in had hoped in their hearts might be the case. As soon as the corps was formed up and their arms and ammunition-pouches examined, the word was given and they marched away towards the gate of Charenton and issued out. Many bodies of troops were converging upon it and the other gates on that side of the city, with trains of ammunition and supply wagons, and there was a delay of an hour before they could pass out. The greater part of the force had left the city on the two previous days, and a

hundred thousand men under Ducrot were massed in the Bois de Vincennes and between that point and the neck of the loop formed by the Marne.

The Franc-tireurs were halted near Charenton, and learning that the attack would not take place till night, the colonel took possession of an empty barn near the village. The men piled their arms outside and made themselves as comfortable as they could. Now that there was no longer any doubt that an engagement would take place in a few hours the natural light-heartedness of the students revived. All had brought with them a good store of provisions in their haversacks, and each man carried a thick blanket besides his military cloak. Many of them had, in addition to their flasks, slipped a bottle of wine into their haversacks, and a meal was joyously partaken of, after which pipes were lighted, and with their blankets wrapt round their legs, all were inclined to agree that campaigning even in winter had its pleasures.

"We are a deal better off than most of the troops," Cuthbert said to Arnold Dampierre, "it must be bitter in the snow out in the woods, and it will be worse when it gets dark."

"It is better for all than it was for our fellows in the South," Dampierre said. "We have warm clothes and plenty to eat. They were in rags and often well-nigh starving."

"Yes, that must have been a very rough business. It is a great advantage that we are Franc-tireurs and therefore free, to a great extent, to follow our own devices. I heard the colonel say that when he had applied for orders he was told that none would be given to detached corps like his, but that now, as at other times, they must make themselves useful when they saw an opportunity. The line are to cross first, then the mobile, and then the active battalions of the National Guards. If I judge the colonel rightly he will manage to put us somewhere in front. We stand well after that affair at Bourget, so I have no doubt he will get us across one of the bridges as soon as the line are over."

Soon after four o'clock it began to get dusk.

The colonel, who had been away endeavoring to find out

what was the general plan of operations, returned soon after. The officers gathered round him.

"Pontoon bridges will be thrown across the river on both sides of the loop. The pontonners will set to work on them when it is dark. I fancy the real attack will be through Champigny, and that on the other side will be more of the nature of a false alarm; so we will go with the main force. There are some strong batteries erected in the loop which will prepare the way for us and a big train of field-guns. The troops will begin to cross at early daylight, so we can't do better than remain where we are until five o'clock. Then we will go and take our place near one of the bridges and slip across as soon as we see an opportunity. With such a mass of troops to move, there are sure to be delays in bringing the regiments up, and the first that occurs, we will slip in and get over. The men may as well lie down at once and get a good night."

It needed somewhat close packing for the men to rest themselves, but the crowding was more than counter balanced by the warmth, and it was not long before all were asleep. At one o'clock in the morning, they were awakened by a tremendous cannonade. All the forts round Paris had suddenly opened fire upon the German positions. Believing that the enemy must have obtained a knowledge of the approaching sortie and were anticipating it by assaulting the forts, the colonel ordered the men to stand to their arms. In an hour the firing ceased and all was quiet again. The men, with a little grumbling at being taken out and chilled in the night air, returned to the barn. At four o'clock they were again aroused by the fire being resumed.

"We may as well be off, lads," the colonel said, "we have some distance to march, and it is not worth while to turn in again."

Between the reports of the guns a dull rumbling sound could be heard.

"The artillery and train are on the move," Cuthbert said to René, who was next to him in the ranks, "so we shall not be too soon if we are to take our share in the early part of the fighting."

They left the main road and followed the fields, as many of them were well acquainted with the country, and they had no difficulty in keeping in the right direction. The men marched at ease, each picking his way as best he could across the ground, which was broken up into small enclosures and gardens. They halted outside a village on the banks of the Marne where one of the pontoon bridges had been thrown across. Here they piled arms and endeavored to keep themselves warm by stamping their feet and swinging their arms.

Soon after morning dawned, heavy firing broke out suddenly behind them. The colonel had learnt at Charenton that General Vinoy, with 15,000 men, was to advance from between the southern forts to attack Ville Juif and the heights of Mesly, so as to induce a concentration of the enemy in that direction, and so to diminish the difficulties of the main advance.

For a time there was a sound of cannon only, then came a crackle of musketry telling that the advance had begun. The battery on the commanding position of St. Maur opened in earnest, and was aided by several batteries of field artillery, the din being now incessant. Gradually the rattle of musketry became fainter, showing that the French were driving the enemy back, and a mounted officer riding past told them that Montmesly was taken. The news raised the spirits of the soldiers to the highest point, and their impatience was becoming almost uncontrollable, when the order arrived for them to advance, and the troops at once began to cross the six pontoon bridges that had been thrown at different points across the Marne.

"There is no hurry, mes braves," the colonel said, as the Franc-tireurs stamped with impatience as they saw the columns crossing the river, while they remained in enforced inactivity. "At first the troops will carry all before them as Vinoy's men have done. The fighting will only commence in earnest when the Prussians bring up their supports. We shall be in time for that, never fear. We ought to have begun at daybreak," he growled, in a low voice, to the major, "four precious hours have been wasted. By this time we ought to have gained at

least three or four miles of ground; in that case we might have been through the Prussian lines before sunset. Every hour in these short days is of importance."

Presently the roll of musketry showed that the French skirmishers were engaged with the German outposts. The Franc-tireurs had by this time moved down close to the bridge; but it was not until midday that they were able to cross; then the colonel, taking advantage of a short delay on the part of one of the regiments to come up to the bridge, pushed the men across, and leaving the road took them forward at the double. By this time the roar of battle was unbroken. The batteries along the heights behind them, the forts, and the field-guns in advance were all hard at work, the shell flying over the heads of the advancing troops and bursting in the villages held by the Germans. In front, the rattle of musketry was deafening. Champigny, they learned from a wounded soldier who was making his way to the rear, had been carried, and the troops there had pushed some distance forward, but on the left Villiers-la-Desert was found to be too strongly fortified to be taken. The French batteries were, however, raining shell upon it.

As the Franc-tireurs approached Champigny they saw that the place had not been taken without a severe struggle. The bodies of French soldiers strewed the ground thickly, and as they passed through the streets, the Saxon uniforms were mingled with those of their assailants. The corps pushed forward until they ascended the low hills behind the village. Here they found the French troops halted. It was evident Ducrot did not intend to advance further until joined by the whole of his command.

"This is pure madness," the colonel said; "by to-morrow we shall have fifty thousand Germans in front of us. If Ducrot hasn't got his whole force, and his train and ambulances up, he might at least carry Villiers by assault. Of course it could not be done without loss, but what have we come out for but to fight. We cannot advance as long as they hold that place, for when their supports come up, as you may be sure they will do ere long, they can pour out from there and take us in the rear,

However, we may as well go forward to the skirmishing line. We will work down by the right. If the German supports come up they are likely to advance that way, and as I hear no firing in that quarter, we may find some spot unoccupied by the line."

The order was given, and the corps marched off, and presently took up their position between the river and the French regiment forming the extreme right flank of the advance. In extended order and taking advantage of every inequality of the ground, they pushed on, and after advancing a quarter of a mile, were brought to a standstill by a sudden outbreak of musketry fire at various points along the crest of a slight rise some six hundred yards in front of them. Taking cover behind a low wall running at right angles to the river, they opened a dropping fire in return. This, however, was at once stopped by the colonel, who himself went along the line.

"Don't throw away a shot, lads," he said, "you may want every cartridge before you have done. It will be time enough to begin when they show in force over that crest."

There was no more for the men to do than there had been when they were waiting for their turn to cross the bridge, but they were satisfied, now they were in the front line, and within shot of the enemy. The march had set their blood in circulation, and while two or three of each company kept a keen lookout over the top of the wall, the others laughed and joked, after first employing themselves in knocking holes through the wall, a few inches above the ground, so that they could lie and fire through if the enemy advanced. The musketry fire had almost ceased away to their right, and they hoped that Vinoy had established himself well out in that direction. Various were the conjectures as to why the advance had ceased on their own side. Some conjectured that Trochu's plan consisted only in crossing the river and then marching back again in order to accustom the troops to stand fire. One suggested that the general had come out without ink or paper with which to write his grandiose proclamations to the Parisians, and they were waiting until it had been fetched from his office.

"What do you think, Henri?" René asked the lieutenant.

"I should say," he said, gravely, "that when our advance came upon the real Prussian line of defence, they found it too strong to be carried. They must have known that they could never hold Champigny under the fire of our guns and forts, and used it only as an outpost. Of course it is from this side they would think it likely that we should try to break out, and they would certainly erect batteries to command all the roads. They have had nothing else to do for the last ten weeks."

"I have no doubt that is partly the reason, Henri," Cuthbert said, "but I think it may be principally due to the fact that Ducrot can't get his troops across the river. Even with a well-organized army and a good staff, and commanding officers who all know their duty, it is a big job to get a hundred thousand men, with artillery, ambulances, and trains across a river. Here, with the exception of Ducrot himself and a few of the line officers, nobody knows anything about the matter. By what we saw, I should think there are not more than twenty thousand men across the river, and the confusion on the other side must be frightful. We ourselves saw that the street of that village was absolutely choked up with wagons, and I have no doubt all the roads are the same. Of course they never ought to have moved forward at all till all the troops were over. If Trochu really meant to break out, the north is the side where he should have tried. The whole force could have been massed between the walls and St. Denis and have been marched in regular order against the Prussians, with the field-batteries at intervals and the trains following at a proper distance on the various lines of roads.

"I hope that is his plan still, and that this attack from the South is only a feint to draw as many of the Germans as possible over to this side. We have a tremendous advantage in having this short line to march across. If Trochu were to send the train off at once, while we recrossed and followed as soon as it was dark, the whole army might be outside the northern wall before morning. To-morrow we might get into position for attack, make all the arrangements, and advance far enough to dash forward at their lines as soon as it is light next day, and

with Ducrot's and Vinoy's force united, we ought to go right through them. We should have 115,000 men, and I don't suppose they could oppose us with a third of that number. However strong their positions, we ought to be able to carry them if we went at them with a rush. Besides, we should have the guns at the northern forts to help us. At any rate, after this delay here, I consider the idea of any further advance in this direction to be out of the question. By to-morrow morning they may have a hundred thousand men facing us, and if we don't recross to-night, we may find it very difficult business to do so to-morrow."

"We have got the batteries and forts to cover us," Henri Vaucour said. "The Germans could never advance against us in force under their fire."

"I hope we are going to cross this evening, if we are going to cross at all," Pierre Leroux said. "It is cold enough now, but if we are going to pass the night here, it will be bitter."

"There are those houses by the river, we are a good deal nearer to them than any other troops," Arnold Dampierre said; "they will hold us if we pack in pretty closely."

As the afternoon wore on, the colonel sent two officers to inspect the houses, which were all found to be empty. As soon as he received the report, he sent twenty men off with orders to cut down hedges and form fagots, and then to light fires in each room. There was no further movement. A heavy musketry fire was kept up far away to the left, and the batteries occasionally fired heavily; but all idea of movement was evidently abandoned for the day, and the enemy were not in sufficient force to take the offensive.

As soon as it became dark, therefore, half a company were left on guard at the wall, and the rest of the corps marched off to the houses. Roaring fires were blazing in every room, for some fruit trees had been cut down and split up into logs. The party on guard were to be relieved every two hours. As soon as the men were bestowed in their quarters, the major went off to discover, if possible, what had been the result of the

fighting on the other side of the loop. It was two hours before he returned, and the news he brought was dispiriting.

"I have been up to Creteil," he said, "and have learnt from the people there who saw the whole affair what has happened. The advance was good. We swept the Germans at first before us, and for a time our fellows made a stand on the crest of Montmesly. But the enemy were reinforced and drove us down the hill again. Then came a disgraceful panic. The soldiers who had fought fairly at first, became a mob; the mobile, who had not done as well as had been expected, were worse. There was a battalion of the National Guard of Belleville, and the scoundrels ran without firing a shot. At Creteil the men absolutely fought to get through the street. It was disgraceful. I hear that further to the right the line did better, and that we still hold Ville Juif and other villages well in advance of our old position. That is all I could learn. They say our losses have been pretty heavy; at any rate Creteil is full of wounded, and the ambulances are taking them into Paris. There is great confusion on the other side of the river. The roads are all choked with the wagon-trains. Nobody has got any orders, nobody knows what is going to be done, no one knows where Ducrot or Trochu are. It is enough to make one tear one's hair to see such confusion and mismanagement."

The night passed off quietly. The next day, to the surprise of everyone, things remained unchanged. No effort was made to pass the baggage-train over the bridges. A portion of the troops had been put under canvas the first evening, and save for the dead still lying about, the broken arms, the stains of blood, and the parties engaged in carrying the wounded across the river to the ambulance wagons, and others burying the dead, the scene differed little from an ordinary encampment. The troops laughed and jested round the camp-fires, and occupied themselves with their cooking; the horses that had been killed were already but skeletons, the flesh having been cut off for food. The advance parties had been called in, and a barricade thrown up just beyond Champigny, where the advance guard occasionally exchanged shots with the Prussians a few

hundred yards away. Strong parties were at work erecting a series of earthworks on the hill.

The Franc-tireurs fell back from the position they had held the night before, and established themselves in a few houses, half roofless and shattered by shell, between Champigny and the river. Most of the houses in the long straggling street of Champigny bore marks of the conflict that had raged there before the Saxons had been driven out. Fortunately large stores of straw were found in the village, and these added much to the comfort of the troops, and the Franc-tireurs carried off a good many trusses to their quarters. Considerable amounts of other stores were also discovered there, and were thoroughly appreciated by the soldiers after their restricted rations.

They smoked their pipes that evening feeling thankful that as they lay behind Champigny there was no occasion for them to turn out on outpost duty.

"They say we shall fight again to-morrow for certain," René said.

"I think it likely we shall, René, but I should be inclined to bet ten to one, that it is the Prussians who will attack. They will have had forty-eight hours to mass their forces here, and will be fools if they don't take advantage of the opportunity we have been good enough to give them."

Day was just breaking when a sharp rattle of musketry broke out. The Franc-tireurs sprang to their feet.

"I should have won my bet, René, if you had taken it," Cuthbert exclaimed, as he slung his cartridge-box over his shoulder. "They are on us all along the line."

In less than a minute the rattle of musketry swelled into a continuous roar, above which came the boom of cannon and the explosion of shells in and around Champigny. Just as the corps was formed up, the heavy guns in the battery of St. Maur behind them opened fire, their deep roar sounding loud above the sharp explosion of the Prussian field-guns. As they advanced at the double towards the village, they could see a mob of panic-stricken men rushing from the front.

"The cowards, the vile cowards!" broke from the lips of the

men, and as some of the fugitives ran past them, they saluted them with yells and cries of contempt. Fully five thousand panic-stricken men were in wild flight, all rushing towards the bridge.

"If I were the commander of St. Maur," René said, "I would turn my guns upon these cowards. They are greater enemies to France than are the Prussians."

"Forward, my children," shouted the old colonel, "let us show them that there are still some Frenchmen ready to fight and die for their country."

The officer in command of St. Maur, and the general on the spot, were equal to the situation. Seventy or eighty field-pieces were massed round the redoubt, and a tremendous fire opened upon the Prussian batteries out on the plain, while a strong guard was sent down to the end of the bridge to bar the way to the mob of fugitives. The Germans had already obtained possession of the other end of the village when the Franc-tireurs entered it, but a small body of troops were standing firm. Some barricades thrown up across the street were manned, and from these and from every house they replied to the fire of the advancing Prussians. But the latter were still pushing on, wresting house by house from their hands, while a hail of shell from the German batteries fell upon the part of the village still held by the French. As the Franc-tireurs advanced the colonel ordered one company to wheel off on either hand to occupy the gardens behind the houses, and so prevent the enemy from taking the defenders in the rear. He himself pressed forward down the street to aid the soldiers at the barricades.

The sun had by this time risen, and its light, glinting on the Prussian helmets, showed strong bodies advancing down the slopes into the village. The woods on either hand were still held by the French, but the irregular fire showed that they were not in strong force. The din was terrific, three or four of the French mitrailleuses were adding to the roar, and sending streams of bullets into the advancing Germans. Nerved by the desperation of the situation, and fiercely angered at the

cowardice of their countrymen, the young artists of Cuthbert's company dashed forward, climbing walls, bursting through hedges, burning with eagerness to meet the foe.

The Prussian shells were bursting all round, bullets sang above and around them, the rattle of musketry grew louder and fiercer, but there was not a moment's check until François des Valles shouted to them to halt behind a low wall. The enemy were but a huudred yards away, pressing forward through the gardens.

"Steady men, steady," he shouted. "Lie down for a minute to get breath, then let every other man open fire, but don't throw away a shot. Let the others try and get some stones out of the wall and make loop-holes."

As yet they had not been seen by the Germans, and these were but fifty yards away in a thick line of skirmishers, when Des Valles gave the word, and the Franc-tireurs, rising on one knee and resting their muskets on the wall, opened a steady fire upon them. Many fell, and taken by surprise the rest ran back to a wall some thirty yards in rear and thence opened a heavy fire.

"Lie down, lads," Des Valles shouted, and all set to work to loop-hole the wall. "Don't show your heads above it, unless they advance again. All we have got to do is to hold our ground."

CHAPTER XIII.

By the aid of their sword-bayonets the Franc-tireurs soon pierced the wall, and lying at full length a yard apart, replied to the enemy's fire. Through the smoke they could just make out the upper line of the wall, and as the Prussians stood up to fire picked them off. Henri Vaucour crept along the line urging the men to fire slowly.

"They will advance presently," he said. "You can tell by the fire that they are getting thicker and thicker. We must check their rush."

Five minutes later there was a deep cheer and a crowd of

dark figures leaped over the wall. A flash of fire ran along the line of defenders, and then as fast as the Chassepots could be reloaded a rolling fire broke out. So heavy was it that before crossing a third of the intervening space the Germans wavered, hesitated, and then ran back to their shelter.

"Bravo! bravo!" Des Valles shouted, springing to his feet in his excitement, but as he spoke the enemy's fire broke out again, "Vive la France!" he shouted, and then fell heavily backwards.

His fall was noticed only by those nearest to him, for the Franc-tireurs were all busy. The rattle of musketry in the houses to their right showed that the French were still holding their own.

The Germans were apparently waiting for reinforcements before they attempted another rush against the position held by their invisible foes. They in turn loop-holed the wall they held and the musketry duel continued. Between the walls were two lines of low hedges, but the leaves had fallen and each party could see the loopholes through which their opponents fired. Henri Vaucour, who was now in command, ordered half the men to crawl back to the next wall some fifty paces in the rear and to loop-hole that.

"The next time they come," he said, "they will be too strong for us and we must fall back." The remainder of the men he placed near the two ends of the wall, so that as they fell back their comrades behind could open their fire and so cover their retreat. It was another quarter of an hour before the Germans made a move. Then a great body of men sprang over the wall. Forty rifles were discharged simultaneously, then Henri's whistle rang out. The men leaped to their feet, and at the top of their speed ran to the wall behind them, from which their comrades were pouring a stream of fire into the Germans. Several fell as they ran, the rest on gaining the wall threw themselves over, and as soon as they had reloaded joined its defenders. The Germans, however, were still pressing on, when they were taken in flank by a heavy fire from the back of the houses held by the French, and they got no farther than the

wall that had just been vacated. Then the musketry duel recommenced under the same conditions as before. The company had already lost thirty men, ten lay by the wall they had defended, killed by bullets that had passed through the loop-holes; eight more were stretched on the ground that they had just traversed. The rest had made their way to the rear, wounded. Cuthbert had had a finger of the left hand carried away as he was in the act of firing. He had felt a stinging blow but had thought little of it until he had taken his position behind the second wall."

"Tie my handkerchief over this, René," he said, "fortunately it is only the left hand, and a finger more or less makes little odds. Where is Dampierre? I don't see him."

"I am afraid he is lying under that wall there," René said; "at any rate I don't see him here; he ought to be the third man from me. Minette will go out of her mind if he is killed," but they had no further time for talking, and as soon as his hand was bandaged, Cuthbert took his place at a loophole.

"I think things are better," he said, after a few minutes, to René. "The shells are not falling round us as they did. The heavy guns at St. Maur must have silenced the German batteries, and I fancy, by the heavy firing from the other end of the village, that we have been reinforced."

This was indeed the case. For some time the Prussians continued to make obstinate efforts to advance, but gradually the number of defenders of the village increased, as the French officers managed to rally small parties of the fugitives at the bridge and led them forward again, their efforts being aided by the mounted gendarmes, who, riding among the soldiers, beat them with the flat of their swords, and literally drove them forward again.

By eleven o'clock the line of the Franc-tireurs had been thickened by the fresh arrivals, and the roar of rifles along the wall was continuous. The French, who had hitherto fought silently, now began to cheer, and when a regiment came up in something like fair order through the gardens, its colonel shouted, "Forward men, and drive the Germans out."

With a cheer of anticipated triumph those who had so stubbornly defended the position sprang up, and the whole rushed forward against the enemy. A tremendous volley flashed from the wall in front of them. Cuthbert felt that he was falling. The thought flashed through his mind that his foot had caught in something, and then he knew nothing more. When he recovered consciousness he was lying with a score of others on the floor of a kitchen. There was a gaping hole in the roof and loop-holes in the walls, but of this at present he saw nothing. A man with a lantern was standing beside him, while another was doing something, he didn't know what, to him.

"What is it?" he muttered.

"You are wounded, mon brave, and seriously I am afraid, but not fatally—at least I hope not."

"Is this Champigny?"

"Yes."

"Then we have held the village?"

"Yes, we beat the Prussians back all along the line, they could not stand our artillery-fire. There, I have bandaged you up for the present, to-morrow morning you will be taken into Paris."

"I should like to go to the American ambulance, if you can manage it, Doctor," Cuthbert said. "I am an Englishman and have friends there."

"I will manage it if I can for you, lad. Your corps has done splendidly to-day. Everyone says if it had not been for you, Champigny would have been lost. So you well deserve anything I can do for you."

The desperate defence of Champigny had indeed saved that portion of the French army across the river from destruction. It had given time for the fugitives to rally, and as if ashamed of the panic to which they had given way, they had afterwards fought steadily and well, and had driven the Germans back beyond the line they had occupied the night before, Brie-sur-Marne being now in the possession of the French, having been carried by a desperate assault, in which General Ducrot led

the way at the head of the troops. During the various operations they had lost about 1,000 killed and 5,000 wounded.

The four days that had elapsed since Mary Brander had said good-bye to Cuthbert at the entrance to the ambulance, had effected a marked change in her appearance. She had returned to her work on the Monday morning, but no fresh cases had come in, for there had been a lull in the skirmishes at the outposts. During the last few days the beds had been cleared out as much as possible to make room for the expected influx, and there was but little for her to do. After going round the tent of which she had charge, the American surgeon put his hand upon her shoulder.

"You are no better, Miss Brander," he said. "This is too much for you. I did not expect to see you break down, for I have noticed that your nerves were as steady as those of an old hospital nurse. Though you naturally lost your color, when standing by with the sponge at some of those operations, there was no flinching or hesitation; but I see that, though you did not show it at the time, it has told upon you. I shall be sorry to lose your services, especially at the present moment; but I think you had better give it up for a time. We have plenty of volunteers, you know."

"I will stay on, if you please, Dr. Swinburne. It is not the work, but the suspense, that has upset me. One has been expecting this dreadful battle to begin for the last three days, and to know that at any moment now 200,000 men may fly at each other, and that thousands upon thousands may be killed is almost too awful to think about. The silence seems so oppressive, one knows that they are gathering and preparing, and that while all seems so still, we may suddenly hear the roar of the cannon all round. I think when it once begins I shall be myself again. It is the waiting that is so oppressive."

"I can understand that," he said, kindly. "It is the same thing with the troops themselves. It is the pause before a great battle that shakes the nerves of the men. As soon as the work begins the feeling passes off and the man who, a few minutes before, was as weak as a child, feels the blood rushing hotly

through his veins, and the burning desire to get at his enemy overpowers all sense of danger. Well, as there is really nothing for you to do to-day, for there are three of you in this tent and only four beds occupied, you had better put your bonnet on again, child; a brisk walk will be the best thing for you; try and interest yourself in what you see passing round you. From what I hear the fighting will not begin until to-morrow morning, and it must be later in the day before the wounded begin to come in. So, though you can return and take charge again to-night if you like, there will be really no occasion for you to do so until to-morrow, say at twelve o'clock; but mind, unless you are looking a good deal better, I shall send you off again; my assistants will need all their nerve for the work we are likely to have on hand. Indeed, I must beg you to do so, Miss Brander, nothing is so trying as sitting in idleness. I shall really want your services to-morrow, and for my own sake, as well as yours, I must insist upon my orders being obeyed."

Mary Brander conscientiously tried to carry out the doctor's instructions, walked briskly along the Boulevards, and then going up the Champs Elysées, and turning to the left, went to the edge of the plateau above the river, and there sat down on a bench and looked over the country to the south. There were many groups of people gathered at this point; most of them, doubtless, like herself, had friends in the army gathered outside the walls, and were too anxious and restless to remain indoors; but although her eyes were fixed on the country beyond the forts, Mary Brander did not take in the scene. She was thinking, as she had been for the last two days, and was full of regrets for the past. She had not altogether admitted this to herself, but she knew now that it was so, although she had fought hard and angrily with herself before she owned it.

"He was right," she said to herself bitterly, "when he said that I had not yet discovered that I had a heart as well as a head. We are miserable creatures, we women. A man can go straight on his way through life—he can love, he can marry, but it makes no change in his course. I know I read somewhere that love is but an incident in a man's life, while it is

a woman's all, or something of that sort. I laughed at the idea then as absurd—now that it is too late I see it is true. He loved me, or, at least he liked me so much that he thought it was love. I laughed at him, I told him he was not worthy of a woman's love. He went away. Here was an end of it, as far as he was concerned. He lost his property and took to work nobly, and when we met he was just the same as he had been before, and treated me as if I had been a cousin, and has no doubt laughed many a time at the thought of that morning in the garden at Newquay, and indeed thought so little of it that he did not mind my seeing all those sketches of that woman in his note-books.

"There were three or four of them, too, stuck up on the walls of his room. Of course she goes there. He said she was a model. Of course he is fond of her. I should not have thought it of him, but men are wicked and women are fools," she added, after a pause, "and I do think that I am one of the most foolish of them. I am like a child who throws away a toy one minute and cries for it the next. It is horrid, and I am ashamed of myself, downright ashamed. I hate myself to think that just because a man is nice to me, and leaves me two pictures if he is killed, that I am to make myself miserable about him, and to feel that I could give up all my plans in life for his sake. I understand now how it is that women are content to remain what they are. It is because nature made them so. We are like weathercocks, and have no fixed point, but can be turned by a passing breath.

"We have no rights because we are content to remain slaves. Here is my life spoilt. A week ago I was my own mistress and felt as free and independent as any man; now a thrill runs through me at ever cannon-shot. The things that had seemed so important to me then do not occupy a thought now. However, I hope I am not quite a fool. I shall shake it off in time perhaps," and she smiled pitifully, "it will even do me good. I shall understand things better. Anna used to tell me I was intolerant and made no allowance for human nature. I laughed then, but she was right. When this is all over I shall go away.

I don't suppose I shall ever see him again, and I will make up my mind not to think of him any more. I wonder what he is doing now, whether his corps went out last night or will go to-day. I hope they won't be in front. They have no right to put volunteers in front when they have got regular soldiers. It is downright wicked that he should have enlisted when it was no business of his. I wonder she let him do it."

Then she broke off, rose to her feet suddenly, and with an angry exclamation, "Mary Brander, you are a weak fool," she started back at a quick pace and with head erect. Again she walked round the Boulevards, and having thoroughly tired herself, made her way home, drank a cup of bouillon made from horse-flesh, went straight to bed and sobbed herself to sleep. She woke up with a start. The house shook with the explosion of heavy guns. She sprang up and went to her window, threw it open, and looked out.

She could see Forts Issy and Vanvres. Both were firing heavily, while between the booms of their guns she could hear the reports of others. No flashes came back from Meudon or any of the Prussian positions. Nor, though she held her breath to listen, could she hear the sound of musketry. She struck a match and looked at her watch. It was but one o'clock. She closed her window and wrapping herself up in her dressing-gown sat there for some time looking out. Presently the fire slackened and she crept back into bed, but again rose when the forts re-opened fire. Then feeling that sleep was impossible she lighted a candle and forced herself to read until daylight. She was dressing when the roar again broke out. This time it was away to the left. She threw on her things, put on her bonnet and cloak, and went out of her room just as M. Michaud issued from his.

"You are going out, mademoiselle. So am I. I will walk with you if you will allow me. I think the real thing has begun. The firing last night was only, I fancy, to rouse the Germans and make them pass as bad a night as our men were doing, but I think this is the real thing."

Mary was glad of his escort, it seemed to make it more bear-

able to have someone to speak to. In a few minutes they reached the spot where she had sat the day before. A crowd were already collected.

"Where is it?" M. Michaud asked, as they joined a group who were gathered near the edge of the plateau.

"It is from the southern forts that they are firing," the man said; "look at the smoke rolling up from them; they are clearing the way for our men. There, do you see that puff of smoke away on the right? That is from a battery up at Creteil, and now the Prussian guns on Montmesly, and all the way round Ville Juif, are answering. The affair is becoming hot. Listen, the Chassepots are at work."

Indeed, between the sounds of the cannon a continuous murmur could be heard. It sounded like a railway train passing over a distant viaduct.

"Is there any place where we can see better from?"

"You would see better from the wall over on that side, but no one is allowed there; half the National Guard are under arms, and have taken the places on the walls of the mobiles, who have gone out."

"It is wretched seeing nothing here," she said, feverishly. "Do you think we could get up to the top of the tower of Notre Dame?"

"It is a long way off," M. Michaud said, "and if people are permitted there you may be sure by this time there is not standing room. Besides, even from there the distance would be too great to make out the movements of the troops."

Mary felt that he was right, and with a little shiver said, "I will hurry back now and will then go down to the ambulance."

She swallowed a cup of coffee in which two eggs from the hidden store had been beaten up; ate a piece of bread, and then started off. As she went along she gathered from the talk in the streets that things were believed to be going on well. The musketry was certainly a good deal further off, and a light smoke was rising far out upon the plain. "They say that we have captured Montmesly, and on this side cannot be far from Ville Juif."

"Ah, these Prussians have begun to learn what Paris can do."

"I expect William and Bismarck are by this time packing up at Versailles," another said. "They will know that their day has come to an end; everyone says they will both be hung if we catch them."

Mary hurried on. She knew that hours must elapse before the wounded could be brought in, but felt a feverish anxiety to be at the ambulance and to hear what was said there. Just before she reached it the roar of the distant combat suddenly increased, but it seemed to her further away to the left. Dr. Swinburne was standing outside the tents when she came up.

"Do you know what is going on, sir?" she asked, breathlessly, as she came up to him.

"I believe that the first firing you heard was the advance of Vinoy, who moved out under cover of the guns of the southern forts. From all I hear he has advanced a considerable distance across the plain. I believe that the firing that has just begun away to the west, is the real battle. Ducrot is out there with 100,000 men, and Vinoy's attack is but a feint to draw the Prussians to the south, and so clear the way for Ducrot, who crosses the Marne and advances through Champigny. I heard the plan last night from one of Trochu's staff. It seems a good one, and if it is carried out with spirit I see no reason why it should not succeed. Your rest has done you good, Miss Brander; your eyes are brighter and you look more like yourself."

"I feel better, Doctor. I have been rating myself soundly and it has done me good. I feel quite ready for work again."

The doctor detected a little pathetic ring beneath the almost defiant tone in which she uttered the words, but he only said—

"We all have need of a scolding occasionally, it acts as a tonic. I should rather like to be braced up myself for to-night's work."

"It is too bad," Mary said, almost indignantly. "You are always insisting on our resting ourselves and you have all the work on your shoulders. There are eight or ten of us, and you are all by yourself."

"Not quite by myself. Mr. Wingfield is of great assistance to me, and his aid will be invaluable when the rush comes.

Besides, a surgeon, after the first operation or treatment, has little more to do than to watch his patient, if he has nurses that he can rely upon. As he goes his rounds he gets their reports, he knows how the patients have passed the night, and if there is any change in their condition, and if the wounds require re-bandaging you are at hand with all that is necessary. It is the responsibility rather than the work which tries one. Still, if one knows that one is doing one's best, and that at any rate the wounded are very much better cared for, and have much better chances of recovery here than in the city hospitals, one must be content. Worry does no good either to one's patients or to oneself. That is a maxim that does for both of us, Miss Brander. Now you had better go in and get everything ready. It is probable that some of those wounded early this morning may soon be brought in."

Mary went in to her marque.

"The child is herself on the list of wounded," the surgeon said, as he looked after her. "She has been fighting a battle of some sort and has been hit pretty hard. Her expression has changed altogether. There was a brisk alertness about her before and she went about her work in a resolute business sort of way that was almost amusing in a girl of nineteen or twenty. It was easy to see that she had good health, plenty of sense, and an abundant confidence in herself. At one moment she would be lecturing her patients with the gravity of a middle-aged woman, and five minutes later chattering away with them like a young girl. I should have put her down as absolutely heartwhole and as never having experienced the slightest real care or trouble, as never having quite recognized that she had grown into womanhood. Well, something has occurred to alter all that. She has received a blow of some sort, and though she may soon get over it she will never be quite the same as she was before. If one wasn't so weighed down with work, and had so many serious matters to think of, she would be an interesting study. I never quite understood what on earth she is in Paris for by herself at such a time as this. But there is something that will give me other matters to think of."

The something was an ambulance wagon which, a minute later, drew up in front of the hospital, and from that moment there was, indeed, no time for doctor or nurses to give a thought to anything save the wounded men who continued to pour in until fully half the 200 beds were occupied. All these men belonged to Vinoy's division. Dr. Swinburne would take no more. There was already more work to do than he could get through before next morning, and none of the wounded who came in later from beyond the Marne were received there, but were distributed among the other hospitals and ambulances, at all of which preparations on a very large scale had been made.

By morning the most pressing part of the work had been done. The wounded had been made as far as possible comfortable. Some of the bullets had been extracted, some of the most urgent amputations made. A fresh batch of nurses arrived to take the places of the white-faced women who had nobly and steadily-borne their part in the trying work of the night.

"I thank you all, ladies," the doctor said, as they gathered outside the tents before going away. "Your assistance has been invaluable; no trained nurses could have shown more nerve and pluck than you have done. I have just learned that it is not likely that there will be a renewal of the fighting to-day, and you can therefore go home with the conviction that you can take your twenty-four hours off duty without fear that there will be any pressure in your absence. I am going to lie down myself for three hours. Even a surgeon has nerves, and I must keep mine steady. There are several operations that must be performed this afternoon and some bullets to hunt up. I beg you all to force yourselves to take something as soon as you get to your homes, and then to go to bed and sleep as long as you can."

It did not seem to Mary Brander when she started that she would be able to walk home, but the keen air revived her and she kept on until she entered Madame Michaud's flat.

"Mon Dieu, my child, how white you look," the French lady exclaimed, as the girl entered the room where she was taking her morning coffee. "What a night you must have had!"

The need for strength was past now, and Mary sank into a chair and burst into a fit of hysterical sobbing. Madame Michaud caressed and soothed her as if she had been an over-tired child.

"There," she said, when Mary recovered a little, "take this cup of coffee and drink it. I have not touched it and there are two eggs beaten up in it. Margot will make me some more in a few minutes. Here is a fresh roll. She made a batch this morning in the oven; try and eat it, my child, and drink the coffee, and then I will help you into bed."

Mary, with a great effort, ate a mouthful of bread, and drank the coffee, and in a quarter of an hour was asleep. It was growing dark when she woke, and remembering the doctor's orders she got up and went into the sitting-room. Madame Michaud kissed her affectionately.

"Now, you are looking more like yourself, my child; truly you looked like a ghost when you came in. It is the husband's turn for duty on the walls so we can sit and have a cosy chat together. Well," she went on, when Mary had taken a seat that she had placed for her by the stove, "all is going on famously. We have pushed the Germans back everywhere and Trochu's proclamation says the plans have been carried out exactly as arranged. There has not been much fighting to-day, we have hardly had a gun fired. Everyone is rejoicing, and all the world agrees that now the Prussians have seen how we can fight they will speedily take themselves off altogether."

"I hope it is so, Madame Michaud; certainly the wounded said that they had advanced a long way on the south side, but I have not heard at all what was done on the other side of the Marne. None of the wounded from there were brought to our hospital.

"Champigny was taken. They say that there was a hard fight there and we pushed the Prussians back beyond it ever so far," and Madame Michaud's arms expressed illimitable distance.

"I suppose there are no reports as to what regiments were engaged," Mary asked.

"Oh, no, but everyone says that the soldiers fought like lions and that the National Guard was splendid."

"There were none of the National Guards brought in wounded to our ambulance," Mary said. "They were all linesmen and mobiles."

"Perhaps there were no National Guards engaged on that side, my dear."

"Perhaps not," Mary agreed. "No, I think they all went out by the east gates."

"Yes, that was where Ducrot commanded and that was where the great fight was to be," Madame Michaud said, complacently; "no doubt he wanted to have the National Guards there."

Mary, having, as the result of her own observations and from imbibing the very pronounced opinions of Cuthbert as to the efficiency of the National Guard, formed an estimate the reverse of favorable to that body, made no reply, but indeed derived some little comfort from a point of view diametrically opposed to that of Madame Michaud, saying to herself that Trochu probably sent the National Guard with Ducrot because it was not likely that they would be called upon to do any serious fighting there.

"Won't you let the boys in, Madame Michaud?" she said, changing the subject. "I think their chatter would do me good, my brain seems stupid still."

The boys were brought in from the next room, where they were doing their lessons. They were full of the reports they had gathered from their school-fellows, and if but half of these had been true it was evident that the remnant of the German army were in full flight towards the frontier, and that the bravest deeds of antiquity faded into insignificance by the side of the heroism displayed by the French soldiers. Their talk and excitement had the effect of rousing Mary and preventing her thoughts reverting to the scene in the ambulance, and at half-past nine she again went off to bed feeling, more like herself than she had done for some days.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARY BRANDER was, as usual, called before daylight by Margot, and was dressing when a sound like the rumbling of a heavy wagon, caused her to pause suddenly, and then hurry to the window and throw it open.

"They have begun again," she exclaimed, "and the firing is heavier than it was before. It comes from the east. It must be Trochu's force engaged again."

She hastily completed her toilet, drank off the coffee Margot had got ready for her, and then started on her way to the ambulance.

"It is louder than ever," she exclaimed. "It must be a terrible battle."

The roar of the cannon never ceased. The windows and doors were all open as she went along, and women in various states of dishabille were talking excitedly to each other from the former across the street; while the men, equally excited, were discussing the battle in groups. All agreed that the forts in the loop of the Marne were engaged. This caused some disappointment.

"We can't be so far out as we thought," one said, "or we should be beyond range of the guns."

"Perhaps the Germans are attacking us," an old man suggested, but the idea was received with derision, and Mary caught no more of the conversation as she hurried along.

It was an absolute relief to her when she entered the ambulance, for the continued roar of the guns and the thought of what was going on were well nigh intolerable to her nerves, and her hands were shaking as she removed her bonnet and cloak. Even the quiet hospital tents shared in the excitement outside. The patients whose hurts were comparatively slight were sitting up in their beds discussing the battle eagerly. Others more seri-

ously hurt raised their heads to listen, while some lying apparently unconscious moaned and moved uneasily, muttering occasionally incoherent words, the quiver in earth and air arousing a dim sense of battle and danger.

"More work for us," Dr. Swinburne said, as he passed her, while she was trying to soothe a restless patient into quiet again.

"I am afraid so, Doctor, and by the sound it will be even worse than the last."

"The loss is not always proportionate to the noise," he said, cheerfully, "the forts may be merely preparing a way for a general advance. They said it was to begin this morning."

As before it was not until evening that the wounded began to come in. Those who were first brought were sombre and depressed. It was the Germans who were attacking; the French had been surprised and badly beaten. But later on the news was better. Champigny had been nobly defended, the French had rallied, and, after hard fighting, the Prussians were driven back and all the ground lost recovered. Some of the wounded had been among those who had defended Champigny. To these Mary put the question she had asked of others who were not too severely wounded to be able to talk. "Who had taken part in the fight?" The mobiles and the line had all been engaged.

"But there were no National Guards, Nurse."

"Had they seen any Franc-tireurs?"

Hitherto the answer to the question had been, no; but the men from Champigny gave a different answer.

Yes, a corps had fought there; they did not know who they were. They were dressed in gray. Whoever they were they fought like tigers. It was they, they all agreed, who saved Champigny.

"The Prussians were advancing," one said, "and we could not have held out much longer. They were advancing by the road, and through the gardens; it was all over with us, when the men in gray came up."

"I was at the barricade," one said, "there were not twenty

of us left there when a company arrived. If they had fought in a hundred battles they could not have done better. They had their colonel with them. A fine old militaire. He was killed by my side. The Prussians never got a foot further, for though we were hard pressed again and again we held our ground till the cowards, who had run, began to come back again. It was hot, mademoiselle. I can tell you it was a rain-storm of bullets, and their shell fell every moment among us, and it would have been all up with them if the batteries had not silenced their guns."

"I was in one of the houses," his comrade put in; "we were doing our best to prevent the Prussians coming up through the gardens behind, but there were but few of us, and they were some hundreds strong. If they had gone on they would have caught us all in a trap, and we were just going to warn the others to fall back when we saw the Franc-tireurs come running up. They were smart fellows as well as brave ones. They knocked loopholes through a wall in no time and clung to it for an hour, at least. Then the Prussians were reinforced heavily. The Franc-tireurs fell back to the next wall, and when the Prussians rushed forward, they gave it them hotly while we took them in flank from the houses; they must have a hundred and fifty men left behind them when they rushed back to the wall they had advanced from.

"And did the Franc-tireurs suffer much?" Mary asked.

"I should say they lost more than half their number. When they formed up after the fighting was over and the Prussians driven back, we gave them a hearty cheer. I believe there were three companies of them when they came up, and altogether there were not more than a strong company paraded. You must not think that all the others were killed, mad'moiselle," seeing by Mary's face that the news was terrible to her. "Of those who didn't parade you may reckon that two-thirds were only wounded."

"Not so many as that," the other, who had not observed Mary's face, said, "they were not the fellows to fall out for a slight wound. Why, the best part of those who paraded had

hurts, and I fancy some of them were serious, though they did their best to make light of it, and waved their caps when we cheered them. You may be sure that those who were missing must have been hard hit indeed."

"Imbecile beast," his comrade growled, as Mary moved silently away, "could you not see by her face that the girl had friends in that corps? Didn't you notice how pleased she looked when we praised their bravery and how white her face came, when I said what their losses were. I tried to comfort her by making out that most of the missing might be only wounded, and then, imbecile that you are, you break in with your talk and as good as tell her that if they ain't all dead, they are likely to be so before long."

"I would have bit my tongue out before I would have said so," the other said, penitently, "but I did not notice her looks. Do you think I would have said it if I had, just as she had been bandaging our wounds, too, like a little mother."

The Franc-tireurs remained in the village all night, and as soon as they fell out had scattered over the whole ground, collected the dead and laid them together and brought the wounded into the houses.

The soldier's estimate was not far wrong; the number of the dead exceeded that of the wounded and most of these were very seriously hurt. Of those found lying behind the walls many had been killed outright, being struck on the head by bullets through the loopholes, behind which they were firing; but of those hit during the retreat, or when at last they took the offensive, many of the wounds, though of a disabling, were not of a fatal nature. The company on the other side of the village had not been pressed so severely, but the Prussian shell had fallen thickly there, and a large proportion of the wounds were caused by fragments of shell or stone. The company which held the barricade had comparatively few wounded, but had lost half their number by bullets through the head as they fired over its crest.

It was hard work, indeed, for the surgeons and nurses that night. For many nothing could be done, they were beyond the

reach of surgical aid ; but not only was there the work of bandaging wounds, but of giving drink and soup to all that could take them, of writing down last messages to friends from those among the dying who retained their consciousness, or in aiding Dr. Swinburne and his assistant in their work, and in temporarily bandaging the wounds of those for whom nothing else could be done till daylight. At eight o'clock next morning an ambulance wagon drew up to the door and an orderly came in to the doctor with a message.

"I have six wounded here. The surgeon told me to tell you that one of them had particularly wished to be brought up to your ambulance, and as the others all belonged to the same corps I was to leave them here."

"I will see if there is room," the doctor said, and calling one of the gentlemen who aided in the service of the ambulance, asked him, "Do you know, Wilson, how many have died in the night?"

"Eight or ten, Doctor."

"Well, get Phillips and Grant to help you to carry out six of them ; lay them in that empty tent for the present. As soon as you have done that bring the six wounded in from the wagon outside."

In a few minutes the injured men were brought in.

"Ah, they are Franc-tireurs," the doctor said.

"They are Franc-tireurs des Écoles," the orderly, who had accompanied them, said ; "the surgeon said they were all students. They deserve good treatment, Doctor, for no men could have fought better than they did. Everyone says that they saved Champigny."

"Put them together, Wilson, if you can, or at any rate in pairs. They are students of the University, the art schools, and so on. If there are not two empty beds together put them anywhere for the present ; we can shift the beds about in a day or two when we get breathing-time."

"There are two vacant beds in No. 2 marque, Doctor."

The doctor stepped to the litter that had just been carried in. Its occupant was sensible.

"Is there any one of your comrades you would prefer to be placed in the bed next to you?" he asked in French.

"Yes, Doctor," he replied in English. "The tall fellow who was next to me in the wagon. I am a countryman of yours, and he is an Englishman, and we are in the same art school."

"An American?" Dr. Swinburne replied. "I am glad, indeed, they brought you here. You may be sure that we will do everything we can to make you comfortable. I will attend to you directly I have seen the others brought in."

Mary Brander's heart gave a bound as she saw the wounded man brought in, for she recognized the uniform at once. A glance, however, at the dark head reassured her. As soon as the stretcher was laid down by the bed which was the last in the line, and the wounded man was lifted on to it she went as usual with a glass of weak spirits and water to his side.

"Will you drink, monsieur," she asked, in French.

"I am an American," he said, with a faint smile, "as I suppose you are."

"No, I am English, which is nearly the same thing."

"I must trouble you to hold it to my lips," he said, "for as you see my right arm is useless, my collar-bone is broken, I believe, and my shoulder-blade smashed. However, it might be worse."

She held a glass to his lips. As he drank a sudden thought struck her.

"Are you Arnold Dampierre?" she asked.

"That is certainly my name," he said, "though I cannot think how you guess it."

"I have heard of you from a friend of mine, Cuthbert Hartington. Can you tell me, sir, if he is hurt?"

"Then you must be Miss Brander. Yes, I am sorry to say he is hurt. I don't know how badly," he went on hurriedly, as he saw the look of pain in her face. "I did not see him until we were put in the wagon next to each other, and he was not much up to talking, and in fact its motion was too much for him and he fainted, but no doubt he will soon come round. They are bringing him into the next bed. Perhaps it will be

better for you if you were to let one of the other nurses attend to him until he comes round a bit."

But Mary shook her head silently. She had been trembling as she asked the question, but she stood stiff and rigid as Cuthbert was brought up. She gave one short gasp when she saw his face as they lowered the litter to the ground. Then she hurried to the table on which the glasses were standing, poured some brandy into a tumbler, and was turning when the surgeon entered the tent. She put down the glass, hurried up to him, and laid a fluttering hand on his arm.

"Come, Doctor; please come quickly."

A momentary flash of surprise crossed his face. However, he said nothing but quickened his steps and stood by the pallet on to which Cuthbert had just been lifted. A shade passed over his face; he put his hand on Cuthbert's wrist, then knelt down and placed his ear over his heart.

"Is he dead?" Mary asked in a whisper, as he rose to his feet again.

"No, no, my dear, I hope he is worth many dead men yet; he has fainted from the jolting of the wagon just as many others that you have seen have done. Fetch that brandy you have just poured out. He is hard hit," and he pointed to a blood-stained patch in his shirt just above the waistband of his trousers. "There is no doubt about that, but we shall know more about it presently."

As she hurried off to fetch the brandy the doctor's lips tightened.

"It is fifty to one against him," he muttered, "still, I have seen men live with similar wounds."

He took the glass from Mary's hands as she returned and poured a little between Cuthbert's lips. Then he listened to the heart's beating again.

"It is stronger already," he said, encouragingly to Mary. "Now, my dear, you had better go out for a few minutes and get a little fresh air. Ask Mrs. Stanmore to come here. I must try and find out where the bullet has gone." As she moved away he went on, "Wait here a minute, Wilson, I shall

want to turn him over directly. Now for the wound. Ah! I thought so!" as he removed a lightly fastened bandage and lifted a pad of lint beneath it.

"There has been no bleeding since he was taken up. No doubt he fell forward at first. Now turn him over. Ah, the bullet has gone right through! He must have been hit by a shot fired at close quarters. Well, that will save us trouble and the chances of complications. It is now a simple question of how much damage it did as it passed through. Ah, Mrs. Stanmore," he went on as the nurse came up with a tray of bandages and other necessaries, "I find that there is not much to do here."

He took two small pieces of lint and rolled them up, poured a few drops of carbolic acid on to them, placed one in each orifice, put pads of lint over them, and passed a bandage twice round the body to keep them in place.

"Thank you, Wilson, that will do for the present. Please pour a little strong brandy and water down his throat, Mrs. Stanmore. Now I will see to the next man. How are you hurt? In the shoulder, I see, by your bandages."

"I was lying down behind a wall, Doctor, and raised myself slightly to fire through a loophole when a bullet came through. I heard the surgeon say that it had smashed the collar-bone, and had gone out through the bone behind. I don't know what he called it, but it is what I should call the shoulder-bone."

"Well, in that case you are in luck," the surgeon said, "if it had glanced more downwards you would have been a dead man five minutes after you were hit. Do you feel comfortable at present?"

"As comfortable as I can expect."

"Then in that case I won't disturb the bandages. They are all tight now, and the man who bandaged you evidently knew what he was about, which is more than I can say for some of those who have sent me in specimens of their handiwork. For the present there is nothing for you to do but to lie quiet. I will have a look at you again later, there are so many cases that must be attended to at once."

"I am in no hurry, I can assure you, Doctor. I suffered too much when they bandaged me to want a repetition of it until it is absolutely necessary."

The doctor nodded and then hurried off to visit the men who had been carried off into the other marquees. As he pushed aside the flaps at the entrance he stopped abruptly, for a few yards away Mary Brander was lying insensible on the ground, now covered with a light sprinkle of snow that had fallen in the morning.

"Poor little girl!" he said, as he raised her in his arms, and carried her into his own tent and placed her in a rocking-chair, "this affair coming on the top of the work last night has been too much for her." He went into the next marque.

"Miss Betham," he said to one of the nurses, "Miss Brander has just broken down; she has fainted. You will find her in a chair in my tent. Take a bottle of salts and a little brandy. When she comes round make her lie down on the bed there, tell her that my orders are absolute, that she is to keep quiet for a time. She is not to go to work in the wards again and she is not to leave my tent until I have seen her. There is no getting a conveyance, and she won't be fit to walk home for some time."

An hour later Dr. Swinburne snatched a moment from his work and looked in at his tent. Mary sprang up from the bed as he entered.

"That is right, my dear," he said, "I see you are active again. I am sure you will be glad to hear that the patient you called me to has recovered consciousness. The bullet passed right through him, which is a good sign. So that trouble is disposed of. As to the future I can say nothing as yet. Of course it depends upon what damage the ball did on its way through. However, I am inclined to view the case favorably. I can only judge by his face, and, although it is, of course, white and drawn, there is not that ashen sort of pallor which is almost a sure sign of injury to vital parts."

"Then you think there is some hope, Doctor," she asked, with her hands lightly clasped before her.

"Honestly, I think there is. He must, of course, be kept absolutely free from anything like agitation, and if you think your presence is likely to agitate him in the slightest degree, I should say that when you come to work again you had better exchange into one of the other wards."

"It will not agitate him in the least, Doctor," she said, after a moment's pause, "I can answer for that. We are old friends, for he has known me since I was a little child; we are more like cousins than anything else, and if he knows which ambulance he is in, I am sure he will be surprised if I do not come to him."

"I think it is likely he will guess," Dr. Swinburne said, "when he hears the nurses speaking English; and, indeed, it seems that either he or one of the others particularly asked to be sent here. If it is as you say, your presence may do him good rather than harm, and you can go to him for a short time; but remember that you are not fit for nursing and that the sooner you are able to get home again the better. You have been on duty more than twenty-four hours and it has been a terribly trying time for you all."

Mary nodded.

"I really feel better now, Doctor. I have been very anxious about Mr. Hartington ever since I knew that his corps had gone out, and I think suspense is harder to bear than anything. You will see I shan't break down again."

"If you do, Miss Brander, remember I shall have to take your name off the list of nurses. We have enough to do and think about here without having fainting young ladies on our hands." He spoke gravely, but Mary saw he was not really in earnest.

"I never thought," she said, "that I should come under the category of a fainting young lady, and I feel humiliated. Then I may go in, Doctor?"

"Yes, if you are sure of yourself and are certain that it won't agitate him."

A minute later she stood by Cuthbert's side. He was lying on his back with his eyes open. A hospital rug had been

thrown over him. As she bent over him his eyes fell on her face and he smiled faintly.

"I was wondering whether you had heard I was here," he said, in a voice so low that she could scarce hear it. "Well, you see, I brought my eggs to a bad market, and your friends, the Prussians, have given me a lesson I would not learn from you. But we beat them fairly and squarely, there is a satisfaction in that."

"There does not seem much consolation in it, Cuthbert," she said, quietly.

"There is to me," he said, "that shows you are not a soldier. To a soldier it makes all the difference as he lies wounded, whether he has shared in a victory or suffered in a defeat."

"Then I am very glad that you have won if it makes any difference to you, Cuthbert. Now you know you have to lie very still, and I am sure talking is very bad for you."

"I don't suppose it makes any difference one way or the other, Mary. A few hours, perhaps, but whether it is to-day or to-morrow is immaterial."

"You must not talk like that, Cuthbert, and you must not think so. The doctor says that although, of course, you are badly wounded, he thinks there is every hope for you."

"So the surgeon said who dressed my wounds last night, Mary, but I knew that he did not really think so."

"But I am sure Dr. Swinburne does think so, Cuthbert. I am certain that he was not trying to deceive me."

"Well, I hope that he is right," Cuthbert replied, but with the indifference common to men in extreme weakness. "I should certainly like to give the finishing touches to those two pictures. There is nothing else to show for my life. Yes, I should like to finish them. You are looking bad yourself," he added, suddenly, "all this is too much for you."

"I am only tired," she said, "and of course it has been trying work for the last twenty-four hours."

"Well, you must go home and get some rest. If I had been going soon I should have liked you to have stopped with me

till I went, but if, as you say, the doctor thinks I may last for a time it does not matter, and I would rather know that you were getting a rest than that you were wearing yourself out here. What o'clock is it now?"

"It is just two. Please don't worry about me. If I were to break down there are plenty to take my place, but I am not going to. Anyhow I shall wait to hear what Dr. Swinburne says when he next comes round, and then if the report is favorable I shall go home for the night and be here again the first thing in the morning. Are you in much pain, Cuthbert?"

"No, I am in no pain at all. I just feel numbed and a little drowsy, and my feet are cold."

Mary went away, filled a tin bottle with hot water and placed it at his feet, and then covered them over with another rug.

"Now you must not talk any more, Cuthbert. Your hands are cold, let me put the rug over them. There, you look more comfortable. Now shut your eyes and try to get to sleep until the doctor comes round."

Cuthbert closed his eyes at once. Mary went about the ward doing her work for the next two hours, returning at frequent intervals to the bedside, and seeing with satisfaction that he was sleeping quietly. At four o'clock the surgeon came in. She was occupied in serving out some soup to the patients and did not go round with him. She had finished her work when he returned to where she was standing near the entrance.

"I did not wake him," he said, in answer to her look, "but his pulse is stronger, and the action of his heart regular. There is certainly a good chance for him. My hopes that there is no vital injury are strengthened. He will, I hope, sleep for hours, perhaps till morning. By that time I may be able to give a more decided opinion. Now, I think you had better be off at once. I can see you have recovered your nerve, but there will be a dozen fresh nurses here in a few minutes, and I shall clear you all out. Do you feel strong enough to walk home?"

"Oh, yes, Doctor, I may come in the first thing in the morning, mayn't I?"

"Yes, if you feel equal to it. It is possible," he thought to

himself, as he went to the next marquee, "that the poor fellow only regards her as a cousin, but I am greatly mistaken if she has not very much warmer feelings towards him, though she did so stoutly declare that they were but old friends."

Mary, putting on her bonnet and cloak, went out. As she did so, a man, in the uniform of the Franc-tireurs, and a young woman approached.

"Pardon, mademoiselle," he said, lifting his cap as he came up to her, "is it possible for friends to visit the wounded?"

Mary glanced at the speaker's companion and at once recognized her. It was the face of which she had seen so many drawings in Cuthbert's sketch-book.

"It is not possible to-day," she said, "except in extreme cases. There have been many applicants, but they have all been refused."

"I fear this is an extreme case," René, for it was he, urged. "It is a comrade of mine, and the surgeon told me after examining him that he was hit very seriously. This lady is his fiancée."

"I know who you mean," Mary said, after a moment's silence, "but she could not see him even if she were his wife. He is asleep now and everything depends upon his sleep being unbroken."

"If I could only see him I would not wake him," the woman wailed, while René asked—

"Can you tell us if there are any hopes for him?"

"The surgeon says there are some hopes," Mary said, coldly, "but that everything depends upon his being kept perfectly quiet. However, I have no power in the matter. I am off duty now, and you had better apply to Mrs. Stanmore. She is in charge of the ward. It is the farthest of the three marquees."

"What is that woman to him?" Minette exclaimed, passionately, as Mary walked on. "She loves him or she hates him. I saw her look at me as you spoke first, and her face changed. She knew me though I did not know her."

"Oh, that is all fancy, Minette. How can she know Arnold? She is tired and worn out. Parbleu, they must have had ter-

rible work there since the sortie began. It is getting dark, but it is easy to see how pale and worn out she looked. For my part I would rather go through that fight in the garden again than work for twenty-four hours in a hospital."

"She knows him," the girl said, positively.

"Well, let us go on. This woman may give you leave to go in."

But Mrs. Stanmore was also firm in her refusal.

"We cannot allow even the nearest relatives to enter," she said, "we are all taken up by duty and cannot have strangers in the wards; but if the patient is likely to die and wishes to see a friend or relative in the city we send for him or her. If you will give me your name and address I will see that you are sent for should the patient ask for you. The rule I can assure you is absolute, and I have no power whatever to grant permission to anyone except in the case I have named."

Minette went away raving, and it needed indeed all René's remonstrances and entreaties to induce her to leave.

"It is clear," he said, "that he cannot be near death; were he so he would assuredly ask for you. So after all it is good news that you have received, and as I told you all along, though the surgeon said that it was a serious wound, he did not say that it was likely to be fatal, as he did in the case of Cuthbert Hartington. These army surgeons do not mince matters, and there was no reason why he should not have said at once to me that the American was likely to die if he thought it would be so."

"I will go to see him to-morrow," she said, with an angry stamp of her foot. "If the women try to prevent me I will tear their faces. If the men interfere to stop me I will scream so loud that they will be forced to let me in. It is abominable to keep a woman from the bedside of the man she loves."

"It is of no use you talking in that wild way, Minette," René said, sternly; "how do you suppose a hospital is to be managed if every sick man is to have women sitting at his bed. It is childish of you to talk so, and most ungrateful. These foreigners are supporting this ambulance at their own expense. The ladies are working like slaves to succor our wounded and

you go on like a passionate child because, busy as they are, they are obliged to adhere to their regulations. At any rate I will come here with you no more. I am not going to see these kind people insulted."

CHAPTER XV.

MARY BRANDER made her way wearily home.

"You have had another terrible time, I can see it in your face," Madame Michaud said, as she entered. "They say there have been four thousand wounded and fifteen hundred killed. I cannot understand how you support such scenes."

"It has been a hard time," Mary said; "I will go up to my room at once, madame. I am worn out."

"Do so, my dear. I will send you in a basin of broth."

Without even taking her bonnet off Mary dropped into a chair when she entered her room and sat there till Margot brought in the broth.

"I don't think I can take it, thank you, Margot."

"But you must take it, mademoiselle," the servant said, sturdily; "but wait a moment, let me take off your bonnet and brush your hair. There is nothing like having your hair brushed when you are tired."

Passively Mary submitted to the woman's ministrations, and presently felt soothed, as Margot with, by no means ungentle hands, brushed steadily the long hair she had let down.

"You feel better, mademoiselle?" the woman asked, presently. "That is right, now take a little of this broth. Please try, and then I will take off your cloak and frock and you shall lie down, and I will cover you up."

Mary made an effort to drink the broth, then the servant partly undressed her and covered her up warmly with blankets, drew the curtains across the window and left her with the words, "Sleep well, mademoiselle."

But for a time Mary felt utterly unable to sleep. She was too worn out for that relief. It had been a terrible time for her.

For twenty-four hours she had been engaged unceasingly in work of the most trying description. The scent of blood still seemed to hang about her, and she vaguely wondered whether she should ever get rid of it. Then there had been her own special anxiety and suspense, and the agony of seeing Cuthbert brought in apparently wounded to death. The last blow had been dealt by this woman. She said she was his fiancée, but although she had it from her lips, Mary could not believe it, She might be his mistress but surely not the other. Surely he could never make that wild passionate woman his wife. Then she felt she was unjust. This poor creature would naturally be in a passion of grief and agony, at finding that she could not go to the bedside of the man she loved. She should not judge her from that. She remembered how different was her expression in some of the sketches she had seen in Cuthbert's book.

"At any rate," she said to herself with a hard sob, "I have no right to complain. He told me he loved me and I was almost indignant at the idea, and told him he was not worthy of my love. There was an end of it. He was free to do as he liked, and of course put it out of his mind altogether as I did out of mine. How could I tell that the time would come when I should find out what a terrible mistake I had made, how could I dream of such a thing! How could I guess that he would come into my life again and that he would have the power to spoil it! What a fool, I have been. What a conceited, silly fool," and so Mary Brander's thoughts ran on till they become more and more vague, and sleep at last arrested them altogether. She was awakened by Madame Michaud coming into the room with a cup of coffee.

"Well, my child, have you slept well?"

"Have I slept, madame? It cannot have been for more than a minute or two." She looked round in surprise. "Why, it is broad daylight, what time is it?"

"It is eleven o'clock, my dear. I thought it was time to arouse you, and in truth I was getting anxious that you had not made your appearance. It is seventeen hours since you lay down."

"Good gracious!" Mary exclaimed. "And I was due at the ambulance at eight. I must have been asleep hours and hours, madame. I lay awake for a time—two hours, perhaps, and the last thing I thought was that I should never get to sleep, and then I have slept all this dreadful time."

"Not a dreadful time at all," Madame Michaud said with a smile. "You have not slept a minute too long. I feared for you when you came in yesterday. I said to my husband in the evening, 'That angel is killing herself. She could scarce speak when she came in, and I cry when I think of her face.' You may thank the good God that you have slept so long and so soundly. I can tell you that you look a different being this morning."

"I feel different," Mary said, as she sprang up, "will you ask Margot to bring me my can of water at once."

"Yes, but drink your coffee and eat your bread first. Margot said you only took a few spoonsful of broth last night."

"I must have my bath first and then I will promise you I will drink the coffee and eat the last crumb of bread. You will see I shall be quite blooming by the time I come down."

Madame Michaud was obliged to admit that Mary looked more herself than she had done for days past when, half an hour later, she came downstairs ready to start.

"I shall be scolded dreadfully, madame, when I get to the ambulance four hours after my time."

"You look so much fitter for work, my dear, that if the doctor has eyes in his head, he will be well content that you have taken it out in sleep."

Mary walked with a brisk step down to the hospital.

"I will think no more of it," she said resolutely to herself. "I have chosen to be a nurse and I will go through with it. I think when I get home after this is over I will become a nursing sister—at any rate I may do some good at that; there is plenty of work in the world, even if it is not in the way I thought of doing it."

But she hesitated when she reached the tents, afraid to go in. One of the other nurses came out presently.

"Which tent is Dr. Swinburne in?" she asked.

"In this," she said, "I was just speaking to him."

"Would you mind going in again and asking him to come out. I am dreadfully late this morning and I should like to see him before I go in."

A minute later the surgeon came out.

"What is it, Miss Brander?" he said, kindly. "I missed you this morning, and hoped you were taking a good sleep."

"That was just it, Doctor, and I do feel so ashamed of myself. They thought I looked tired, when I came in, and were silly enough not to wake me this morning."

"Not silly at all, my dear. They did the very best thing for you, for you had gone through a terrible strain here. I am glad, indeed, it was sleep and not illness that kept you away. You are looking quite a different woman this morning."

"I am so glad that you are not angry. Please tell me how the wounded are getting on?"

"There were ten deaths in the night," he said, "but as a whole they are going on well. You will be glad to hear that the young Englishman who was shot through the body has passed a quiet night, and I have now an almost assured hope that he will recover. Had there been any vital injury its effects would be visible by now. Now run in and take up your work."

With a grateful look Mary entered the tent and was soon engaged at her work. She was some little time before she made her way to the farther end of the tent. Then she went quietly up to Cuthbert's bedside.

"I have just had good news of you, Cuthbert. The doctor says he has the strongest hopes now of your recovery."

"Yes, he has been telling me that I am doing well," he said. "Have you only just come? I have been wondering what had had become of you. You looked so pale, yesterday, that I was afraid you might be ill."

"I have been sleeping like a top," she said, "for I should be ashamed to say how many hours. Of course I ought to have been here at eight, but they did not wake me, and I feel all the better for it."

"I remember not so long ago," he said, "that a certain young lady declared that it was ridiculous for persons to interfere in business which did not concern them. Now here you are knocking yourself up and going through horrible work for people who are nothing to you. That is a little inconsistent."

"I do not argue with people who cannot speak above a whisper," she said. "Another time I shall be able to prove to you that there is nothing inconsistent whatever in it. Well, thank God that you are better, Cuthbert. I should not have gone away yesterday afternoon if Dr. Swinburne had not assured me that there was nothing that I could do for you, and that he really thought you might recover. You believe me, don't you?"

He nodded.

"I do believe you, Mary. I did not think myself that I had a shadow of a chance, but this morning I began to fancy that the doctor may be right, and that I may possibly live to be a shining light among artists."

"Did you sleep at all?" she asked.

"Yes, I have been dozing on and off ever since you went away. I have drunk a good deal of brandy and water and I really think I could take some broth. I told the doctor so this morning, but he said I had better wait another twelve hours, and then I might have two or three spoonsful of arrowroot, but the less the better. I suppose there is no list of killed and wounded published yet. I should like to know who had gone. They were good fellows, every one of them."

"I don't know, Cuthbert, but I should hardly think so. I think Madame Michaud would have told me had there been a list published this morning."

Mary now turned to the next bed, but the patient was lying with his eyes closed.

"I expect he has gone off to sleep," Cuthbert said, "he has been in a lot of pain all night and half an hour ago they took off his bandages and put on fresh ones, and I fancy they must have hurt him amazingly. I could tell that by his quick breathing, for he did not utter a moan. I am glad that he has gone off

to sleep. I heard the doctor tell him that he thought he might get the use of his arm again, though it would probably be stiff for some time."

"You must not talk, indeed you mustn't," she said, facing round again. "I am sure the doctor must have told you to keep perfectly quiet. If you are quiet and good, I will come to you very often, but if not I shall hand you over to the charge of another nurse. I blame myself for asking you any questions. Indeed I am quite in earnest; you are not fit to talk; the slightest movement might possibly set your wound off bleeding; besides you are not strong enough; it is an effort to you, and the great thing is for you to be perfectly quiet and tranquil. Now shut your eyes and try to doze off again."

She spoke in a tone of nursely authority, and with a faint smile he obeyed her orders. She stood for a minute looking at him, and as she did so her eyes filled with tears at the change that a few days had made, and yet her experience taught her that it would be far greater before long. As yet weakness and fever, and pain, had scarcely begun their work of hollowing the cheeks and reducing him to a shadow of himself. There was already scarcely a tinge of color in his face, while there was a drawn look round the mouth and a bluish tinge on the lips. The eyes seemed deeper in the head and the expression of the face greatly changed—indeed, it was rather the lack of any expression that characterized it. It might have been a waxen mask.

From time to time she went back to him, and although the soft clinging material of her dress and her list slippers rendered her movements noiseless, he always seemed conscious of her presence, and opened his eyes with a little welcoming smile, as she stood beside him, sipped a few drops from the glass she held to his lips, and then closed his eyes again without a word. After a few hours the period of pain and fever set in, but the doctor found no reason for anxiety.

"You must expect it, my dear," he said to Mary one day when the fever was at its height. "A man cannot get through such a wound as his without a sharp struggle. Nature cannot

be outraged with impunity. It is certain now that there was no vital injury, but pain and fever almost necessarily accompany the efforts of nature to repair damages. I see no reason for uneasiness at present. I should say that he has an excellent constitution, and has never played the fool with it. In a few days in all probability the fever will abate, and as soon as it does so, he will be on the highway to convalescence."

During that ten days Mary seldom left the hospital, only snatching a few hours, sleep occasionally in a tent which had now been erected for the use of the nurses on duty. At the end of that time the struggle was over and the victory won, and Cuthbert lay terribly weak and a mere shadow of himself, but free from fever and with perfect consciousness in his eyes.

"How long have I been here?" he asked Mary.

"I think it is a fortnight to-day since you came in, Cuthbert," she answered, quietly. "Thank God you are quite out of danger now, and the doctor says all we have got to do is to build you up."

"You have had a hard time of it, child," he said, ; "though I knew nothing else, I seemed to be conscious that you were always near me."

"I have had plenty of sleep, Cuthbert, and am perfectly well," she said, cheerfully.

"Then your look belies you," he said, "but I know that it is no use arguing. What has been happening outside?"

"Nothing. The troops were withdrawn the day after the fight when you were wounded, and nothing has been done since."

"How is Dampierre getting on?" he asked.

"He is getting on well, I believe," she replied. "He was delirious and so restless, and talked so loud that the doctor had him carried into another ward so that you should not be disturbed by it. I have not seen him since, but I hear he is going on very well. Your friend René has been here twice—indeed he has been every day to inquire—but he was only let in twice. He seems a very kind-hearted fellow and was very cut up about you. I am sure he is very fond of you. He says that Monsieur Goudé and the other students have all been

most anxious about you, and that he comes as a sort of deputation from them all."

René had, indeed, quite won Mary's heat by the enthusiastic way in which he had spoken of Cuthbert, and had quite looked forward to the little chat she had with him every morning when he came to the ambulance for news.

"He is a grand fellow, mademoiselle," he would say, with tears in his eyes, "we all love him. He has such talents and such a great heart. It is not till now that we quite know him. When a man is dying men speak of things they would not tell otherwise. There are four or five that he has helped, and who but for him must have given up their studies. The rest of us had no idea of it. But when they knew how bad he was, first one broke down and then another, and each told how generously he had come to their aid and how delicately he had insisted upon helping them, making them promise to say no word of it to others. Ma foi, we all cried together. We have lost six of our number besides the five here. The rest, except Dampierre, are our countrymen, and yet it is of your Englishman that we think and talk most."

All this was very pleasant to Mary. Cuthbert was now of course nothing to her, but it soothed her to hear his praises. He had been wicked in one respect, but in all others he seemed to have been what she had thought of him when he was a child, save that he developed a talent and the power of steady work, for which she had never given him credit, for on this head René was as emphatic as on other points.

"He will be a great artist, mademoiselle, if he lives. You do not know how much the master thought of him and so did we all. He worked harder than any of us, much harder; but it was not that only. He has talent, great talent, while the rest of us are but daubers. You will see his pictures hung on the line and that before long. We are all burning to see those he was painting for the Salon this year. There are only three of us painting for that, the master would not let any others think of it. Pierre Leroux, is the third and he would have had little chance of being hung had not the Englishman gone into his

room one day, and taking his brush from his hand transformed his picture altogether—transformed it, mademoiselle—and even Goudé says now that it is good and will win a place. But Pierre declares that he has not the heart to finish it. If Cuthbert dies he will put it by for another year."

René was admitted to see Cuthbert the day after the fever had left him and sat for an hour by his bedside telling, after his first burst of emotion on seeing the change that had taken place in him, about the fate of his comrades in the studio. Mary did not go near them. There were questions Cuthbert would want to ask. Messages that he would want to send that she ought not to hear. She had wondered that this woman, who had for a time come every day and had as regularly made a scene at the entrance to the ambulance, had, since Cuthbert was at his worst, ceased coming.

She had never asked about her, and was ignorant that for the last four days she had been allowed to sit for a time by the side of a patient in another ward. She thought most likely that she was ill and had broken down under the stress of her grief and anxiety. She had even in thought pitied her. It was she and not herself that ought to be watching Cuthbert's bedside. She might not be good, but she was a woman and she loved, and it must be terrible for her to know how ill he was, and never to be allowed even to see him for a moment. It was evident that she had been taken ill, and when on René's leaving she went to her patient she expected to find him downcast and anxious. Sad he certainly was, but he did not seem to her restless or excited as she had expected.

"I have been hearing of the others," he said. "Six of them are gone, all merry lads, taking life easily, as students do, but with plenty of good in them, that would have come to the surface later on. It will make a sad gap in our ranks when the rest of us come together again. The wounded are all going on well, I hear, that of course is a great comfort. I hear the other two companies suffered much more than we did. The walls we fought behind saved us a good deal you see. René says the troops all went out again three days ago, and that there was a talk of

a great fight, but there has only been some skirmishing and they have begun to come back into the town again. Our corps did not go out. They think they have done a fair share of the work, and I think so too. René says the old major, who is now in command, is so furious at the cowardice shown last time by the National Guards and some of the troops that he declares he will not take out his brave lads to throw away their lives when the Parisians will not venture within musket-shot of the enemy.

"I think he is quite right. I hope there will be no more sorties, for I am sure it would be useless. If you had seen, as I did, seven or eight thousand men running like a flock of frightened sheep, you would agree with me that it would be hopeless to think of breaking through the Germans with such troops as this. One victory would make all the difference in the world to their morale, but they will never win that one victory, and it will take years before the French soldier regains his old confidence in himself. Have you taken to rats yet, Mary?" he asked, with a flash of his old manner.

"No, sir, and do not mean to. We are still going on very fairly. The meat rations are very small, but we boil them down into broth, and as we have plenty of bread to sop into it we do very well; our store of eggs have held on until now. We have been having them beaten up in our morning coffee instead of milk, but they are just gone, and Madame Michaud says that we must now begin upon the preserved meat. We are a long way from rats yet, though I believe they are really hunted and eaten in great numbers in the poorer quarters."

"And there is no talk of surrender?"

"No talk at all; they say we can hold on for another month yet."

"What is the news from the provinces?"

"Everywhere bad. Bourbaki has been obliged to take refuge in Switzerland and his force has been disarmed there. Chanzy has been beaten badly near New Orleans, and the Prussians have probably by this time entered Tours. Faidherbe has gained some successes in the north, but as the Germans

are pushing forward there, as well as everywhere else, that does not make very much difference to us."

"Then what on earth's the use of holding out any longer," he said. "It is sheer stupidity. I suppose the Parisians think that, as they can't fight, they will at least show that they can starve. What is the weather like? I felt very cold last night though I had plenty of blankets on."

"It is terribly cold," she said. "The snow is deep on the ground—it is one of the coldest winters that has been for years."

"What is the day of the month?"

"The 26th."

"Then yesterday was Christmas Day."

"Yes," she said, "not a merry Christmas this year to any of us—no roast beef, no plum-pudding, no mince-pies—and yet, Cuthbert, I had every reason to be thankful, for what a much more unhappy Christmas it might have been to me."

He nodded.

"I know what you mean. Yes, you would have missed me, child, cut off as we are from the world here. I am, as it were, the sole representative of your family. Of course, you have not heard from them."

She shook her head.

"I don't suppose they trouble much about me," she said, a little bitterly, "I am a sort of disappointment, you know. Of course I have been away now for nearly two years, except for the fortnight I was over there, and even before that I scarcely seemed to belong to them. I did not care for the things that they thought a great deal of, and they had no interest in the things I cared for. Somehow I don't think I have got on well with them ever since I went up to Girton. I see now it was entirely my own fault. It does not do for a girl to have tastes differing from those of her family."

"I felt that, Mary. I felt it very much. I have told myself ever since the day of dear old father's death that I have been a brute, and I wish with all my heart I had put aside my own whims and gone in for a country life. It is all very well

to say I did not like it, but I ought to have made myself like it; or if I could not do that, I ought to have made a pretence of liking it, and to have stuck to him as long as I lived. I hadn't even the excuse of having any high purpose before me."

"We all make mistakes in our lives, Cutbert," the girl said, quietly, "and it is of no use bemoaning them—at any rate you have done your best to retrieve yours, and I mean to do my best to retrieve mine. I have quite made up my mind that when this is over I shall go to London and be regularly trained as a hospital nurse, and then join a nursing sisterhood."

"What! and give up woman in general?" Cuthbert said, with a faint laugh. "Will you abandon your down-trodden sisters? Impossible, Mary."

"It is quite possible," she said, in a business-like manner.

"Become a back-slider! Mary, you absolutely shock me. At present you have got nursing on the brain. I should have thought that this ambulance work would have been enough for a life-time. At any rate I should advise you to think it over very seriously before you commit yourself too deeply to this new fad. Nursing is one of the greatest gifts of women, but after all woman wasn't made only to nurse, any more than she was to devote her life to championing her sex."

Mary did not reply but silently moved off with an air of deeply-offended dignity.

"What an enthusiastic little woman she is," Cuthbert laughed quietly to himself; "anyhow she is a splendid nurse, and I would infinitely rather see her so, than as a female spouter on platforms. I fancied the siege might have had some effect on her. She has seen something of the realities of life and was likely to give up theorizing. She looks older and more womanly, softer a good deal than she was. I think I can improve that picture now. I had never seen her look soft before, and had to trust to my imagination. I am sure I can improve it now."

Another fortnight and Cuthbert was out of bed and able to walk about in the ward and to render little services to other patients.

"Do you know, Mary," he said, one day, when she happened to be idle and was standing talking to him as he sat on the edge of his bed, "a curious thing happened to me the very day before we went out on that sortie. I saw that fellow, Cumming, the rascal that ruined the bank, and then bolted, you know. For a moment I did not recall his face, but it struck me directly afterwards. I saw him go into a house. He has grown a beard, and he is evidently living as a quiet and respected British resident. It was a capital idea of his, for he is as safe here as he would be if he were up in a balloon. I intended to look him up when I got back again into Paris, but you see circumstances prevented my doing so."

"Of course you will get him arrested as soon as the siege is over, Cuthbert. I am very glad that he is found."

"Well, I don't know that I had quite made up my mind about that. I don't suppose that he made off with any great sum. You see the companies he bolstered up with the bank's money, all smashed at the same time. I don't suppose that he intended to rob the bank at the time he helped them. Probably he had sunk all his savings in them, and thought they would pull round with the aid of additional capital. As far as I could make out, from the report of the men who went into the matter, he did not seem to have drawn any money at all on his own account, until the very day he bolted, when he took the eight or ten thousand pounds there was in the safe. No. I don't think I meant to hand him over or indeed to say anything about it. I thought I would give him a good fright, which he richly deserves, and then ask him a few questions. I have never quite understood how it was that dear old dad came tc buy those shares. I did inquire so far as to find out it was Cumming himself who transferred them to him, and I should really like to hear what was said at the time. If the man can prove to me that when he sold them he did not know that the bank was going to break, I should have no ill-will against him, but if I were sure he persuaded him to buy, knowing that ruin would follow, I would hunt him down and spare no pains to get him punished."

"Why should he have persuaded your father to buy those shares?"

"That's just what I cannot make out. He could have had no interest in involving him in the smash. Besides they were not on intimate terms in any way. I cannot imagine that my father would have gone to him for advice in reference to business investments. It was, of course, to your father he would have turned in such matters."

"How long had he been a shareholder?"

"He bought the shares only two months before his death, which makes the matter all the more singular."

"What did father say, Cuthbert?" the girl said, after a short pause. "I suppose you spoke to him about it."

"He said that my father had heard some rumors to the effect that the bank was not in a good state, and having no belief whatever in them, he bought the shares, thinking that his doing so would have a good effect upon its credit, in which as a sort of county institution, he felt an interest."

"But did not father, who was solicitor to the bank, and must have known something of its affairs, warn him of the danger that he was running?"

"That is what I asked him myself, but he said that he only attended to its legal business, and outside that knew nothing of its affairs."

"It seems a curious affair altogether," Mary said, gravely. "But it is time for me to be at work again."

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILE in the ambulance, Mary Brander resolutely put her conversation with Cuthbert aside, but as soon as she started for her walk home, it became uppermost in her thoughts. It was certainly a curious affair. From time to time friends at home with whom she corresponded, sent her local newspapers, and this had especially been the case during the first few

months of her stay in Germany, as they naturally supposed she would be greatly interested in the calamity of the bank failure.

She had, at the time it was issued, read the full report of the committee of investigation upon its affairs, and, although she had passed lightly over the accounts, she had noticed that the proceeds of the sale of the Fairclose estates were put down as subject to a deduction of fifteen thousand pounds for a previous mortgage to Jeremiah Brander, Esq. The matter had made no impression upon her mind at this time, but it now came back to her remembrance.

Of course it was perfectly natural that if Mr. Hartington wished to borrow money it was to her father, as his solicitor and friend, that he would have gone. There could be nothing unusual in that, but what Cuthbert had told her about Mr. Hartington buying the shares but two months before his death was certainly singular. Surely her father could have prevented his taking so disastrous a step. Few men are regarded by members of their family in exactly the same light as they are considered by the public, and Jeremiah Brander was certainly no exception. While the suavest of men in the eyes of his fellow-townsmen, his family were well aware that he possessed a temper. When the girls were young his conversation was always guarded in their hearing, but as they grew up he no longer felt the same necessity for prudence of speech, and frequently indulged in criticisms of the colleagues, for whom he professed the most unbounded respect and admiration in public.

Mary had often felt something like remorse at the thought that the first time she read Martin Chuzzlewit, many touches in the delineation of Mr. Pecksniff's character had reminded her of her father. She believed him to be a just and upright man, but she could not help admitting to herself that he was not by a long way the man the public believed him to be. It was a subject on which she rarely permitted herself to think. They had never got on very well together, and she acknowledged to herself that this was as much her fault as his. It was not so much the fact that she had a strong will and was bent on going her own way, regardless of the opinion of others, that had

been the cause of the gulf which had grown up between them, as the dissimilarity of their character, the absolute difference between the view which she held of things in general, to that which the rest of her family entertained regarding them, and the outspoken frankness with which she was in the habit of expressing her contempt for things they praised highly.

Thinking over this matter of Mr. Hartington's purchase of the bank shares, she found herself wondering what motive her father could have had in permitting him to buy them, for knowing how the Squire relied upon his opinion in all business matters, she could not doubt that the latter could have prevented this disastrous transaction. That he must have had some motive she felt sure, for her experience of him was amply sufficient for her to be well aware that he never acted without a motive of some sort. So far as she could see, no motive was apparent, but this in no way altered her opinion.

"Cuthbert thinks it a curious affair, and no wonder," she said to herself. "I don't suppose he has a suspicion that anything has been wrong, and I don't suppose there has; but there may have been what they call sharp practice. I don't think Cuthbert likes my father, but he is the very last man to suspect anyone. It was horrid, before, being at Fairclose—it will be ten times as bad now. The whole thing is disgusting. It is wicked of me to think that my father could possibly do anything that wasn't quite honorable and right—especially when there is not the slightest reason for suspecting him. It is only, I suppose, because I know he isn't exactly what other people think him to be, that makes me uneasy about it. I know well enough that I should never have gone away from home as I did, if it had not been that I hated so to hear him running down people with whom he seemed to be so friendly, and making fun of all the things in which he seemed so interested. It used to make me quite hateful, and he was just as glad, when I said I should like to go to Girton, to get rid of me as I was to go.

"It is all very well to say, honor your father and mother, but if you can't honor them what are you to do? I have no doubt I am worrying myself for nothing now, but I can't help it. It

is dreadful to feel like that towards one's father, but I felt quite a chill run through me when Cuthbert said he should go and see that man Cumming and try to get to the bottom of things. One thing is certain, I will never live at Fairclose—never. If he leaves it between us, Julia and Clara may live there if they like, and let me have so much a year and go my own way. But I will never put foot in it after father and mother are gone. It is all very miserable, and I do think I am getting to be a most hateful girl. Here am I suspecting my own father of having done something wrong, although of what I have not the least idea, and that without a shadow of reason, then I am almost hating a woman because a man I refused loves her. I have become discouraged and have thrown up all the plans I had laid down for myself, because it does not seem as easy as I thought it would be. No, that is not quite true. It is much more because Cuthbert has laughed me out of them. Anyhow I should be a nice woman to teach other women what they should do, when I am as weak as the weakest of them. I don't think there ever was a more objectionable sort of girl in the world than I have become."

By the time that she had arrived at this conclusion she had nearly reached home. A sudden feeling that she could not in her present mood submit to be petted and fussed over by Madame Michaud struck her, and turning abruptly she walked with brisk steps to the Arc de Triomphe and then down the Champs Elysées and along the Rue Rivoli, and then round the Boulevards, returning home fagged out, but the better for her exertion. One thing she determined during her walk, she would give up her work at the ambulance.

"There are plenty of nurses," she said, "and one more or less will make no difference. I am miserably weak, but at any rate I have sense enough to know that it will be better for me not to be going there every day, now that he is out of danger. He belongs to someone else, and I would rather die than that he should ever dream what a fool I am; and now I know it myself it will be harder and harder as he gets better to be talking to him indifferently." Accordingly the next morning, when

she went down, she told Dr. Swinburne that she felt that she must, at any rate for a time, give up nursing.

"You are quite right, Miss Brander," he said, kindly, "you have taxed your strength too much already, "and are looking a mere shadow of what you were two months ago. You are quite right to take a rest. I have plenty of assistance, and there is not likely to be such a strain again as that we have lately gone through. Paris cannot hold out many weeks longer, and after the two failures I feel sure that there will be no more attempts at a sortie, especially as all hopes that an army may come to our relief are now at an end."

She found it more difficult to tell Cuthbert, but it was not necessary for her to begin the subject, for he noticed at once that she had not the usual nursing-dress on.

"You are going to take a holiday to-day, I suppose?" he said, as she came up to his bedside.

"I am going to take a holiday for some little time," she said, quietly. "They can do very well without me now. Almost all the patients in this ward are convalescent, and I really feel that I need a rest."

"I am sure you do," he said, earnestly, "it has been an awful time for you to go through, and you have behaved like a heroine. A good many of us owe our lives to you, but the work has told on you sadly. I don't suppose you know yourself how much. We shall all miss you at this end of the ward—miss you greatly, but I am sure there is not one who will not feel as I do, glad to know that you are taking a rest after all your work. Of course you will look in sometimes to see how your patients are progressing. As for myself I hope I shall be able to come up to see you at the Michauds in another ten days or so. Now that the doctor has taken to feeding me up I can feel that I am gaining strength every day."

"You must not hurry, Cuthbert," she said, gravely. "You must keep quiet and patient."

"You are not in your nursing-dress now, Miss Brander, and I decline altogether to be lectured by you. I have been very good and obedient up to now, but I only bow to lawfully con-

stituted authority, and now I come under the head of convalescent I intend to emancipate myself."

"I shall not come down here to see you unless I hear good accounts of your conduct," she said, with an attempt to speak playfully. "Well, good-bye, Cuthbert. I hope you will not try to do too much."

"Good-bye, dear, thanks for all your goodness to me," he said, earnestly, as he held her hand for a moment in his.

"He had no right to call me dear," Mary thought, almost indignantly, as he left the hospital, "and he does not guess I know why she is longing to be out again. I almost wonder he has never spoken to me about her. He would know very well that I should be interested in anything that concerns him, and I think he might have told me. I suppose he will bring her up some day and introduce her as his wife. Anyhow I am glad I know about it, and shall be able to take it as a matter of course."

Mary did not pay another visit to the ambulance. Now that she had given up her work she felt the reaction, and although she refused to take to her bed she passed her time sitting listless and weak in an easy-chair, paying but slight attention to Madame Michaud's talk, and often passing the greater part of the day in her own room.

Madame Michaud felt so uneasy about her that she went down to the ambulance and brought up Dr. Swinburne, who scolded Mary for not having sent for him before. He prescribed tonics, sent her up a dozen of wine from the hospital, ordered her to wrap herself up and sit at an open window for a time each day, and to make an effort to take a turn round the garden as soon as she felt strong enough to do so.

On his return to the ambulance the surgeon said carelessly to Cuthbert, who had now gained sufficient strength to be of considerable use as an assistant in the ward—

"I have been up to see your late nurse, Miss Brander. There is nothing serious the matter with her, but, as I thought likely would be the case, she has collapsed now that her work is over, and will need a good deal of care and attention to build her up

again. You will be out in a few days now and I am sure it will do her good if you will go up and have a chat with her and cheer her up a bit. She is not in bed. My visit did her good; but she wants rousing, and remember if you can get her to laugh, and joke her about her laziness, it will do more good than by expressing your pity for her."

"I think I am well enough to be discharged now, Doctor,' Cuthbert said, eagerly.

"Yes, but you will have to be very careful for some time. You will want generous food, and I don't see how you are to get it outside."

"I suppose the restaurants are still open?"

"The common ones are closed, but you can still get a dinner at some of the best places, although you will have to pay very heavily for it."

"I don't mind that, Doctor; and besides I am very anxious to be at work again. It will be no more tiring standing at an easel than it is doing what I can to help here."

"That is true enough, providing you do not do too much of it. Up to a certain extent it will be a good thing for you, but mind, I distinctly forbid you to attempt any such folly as to try to walk from the Quartier Latin up to Passy. Let me see," he added, thoughtfully. "Yes, I think it can be managed. I will send you home by the ambulance that will be here to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. You are to keep yourself quiet all day, and I will get Madame de Millefleurs to send her carriage round for you at eleven o'clock next day, to take you round by Passy. She has told me many times that it is always at the disposal of any of my patients to whom it would be useful. I will see her some time to-morrow and arrange about it."

"Thank you, indeed, Doctor. I need not say how grateful I am to you for all the kindness I have received here."

"We have done the best we could for you," the doctor said, "and I am sure there is not one of those who have provided funds for this ambulance but feels well rewarded by the knowledge that it has been the means of saving many lives. I think

we may say that we have not lost one whom it was humanly possible to save, while in the French hospitals they have lost hundreds from over-crowding, want of ventilation, and proper sanitary arrangements. The mortality there has been fearful, and the percentage of deaths after amputations positively disgraceful."

René came late that afternoon to pay a visit to Cuthbert, and was delighted to find that he was to be out next morning.

"I have kept your rooms in order," he said, "and will have a big fire lighted in them before you arrive. They will give you breakfast before you leave, I hope."

"They will do that, René, but I shall manage very well if there is still anything left of that store of mine in the big cupboard."

"You may be sure that there is," René replied. "I am always most particular in locking up the doors when I come away, and I have not used the key you gave me of the cupboard. I was positively afraid to. I am virtuous, I hope, but there are limits to one's power to resist temptation. I know you told me to take anything I liked but if I had once began I could never have stopped."

"Then we will have a feast to-morrow, René. Ask all the others in to supper, but you must act as cook. Tell them not to come to see me till eight o'clock. If they kept dropping in all day it would be too much for me. *I* wish Dampierre could be with us, but he has not got on so fast as I have. His wounds were never so serious, but the doctor said the bones were badly smashed and take longer to heal. He says he is not a good patient either, but worries and fidgets. I don't think those visits of Minette were good for him, the doctor had to put a stop to them. He would talk and excite himself so. However, I hear that he is likely to be out in another fortnight."

"By that time it will be all over," René said, "negotiations are going on now, and they say that in three or four days we shall surrender."

"The best thing to do, René. Ever since that last sortie failed all hope has been at an end, and there has been no point

in going on suffering, for I suppose by this time the suffering has been very severe."

"Not so very severe, Cuthbert. Of course, we have been out of meat for a long time, for the ration is so small it is scarcely worth calling meat, but the flour held out well and so did the wine and most other things. A few hundred have been killed by the Prussian shells, but with that exception the mortality has not been very greatly above the average, except that smallpox has been raging and has carried off a large number. Among young children, too, the mortality has been heavy, owing to the want of milk and things of that sort. I should doubt if there has been a single death from absolute starvation."

To M. Goudé's students that supper at Cuthbert Hartington's was a memorable event. The master himself was there. Two large hams, and dishes prepared from preserved meats were on the table, together with an abundance of good wine. It was the first reunion they had had since the one before the sortie, and it was only the gaps among their number, and the fact that their host and several of their comrades were still weak, and greatly changed in appearance, that restrained their spirits from breaking into hilarity.

The next morning Madame de Millefleurs' carriage came to the door and Cuthbert was driven to the Michauds. For a moment Margot failed to recognize Cuthbert as she opened the door. As she did so she exclaimed—

"Mon Dieu, Monsieur Hartington, you look like a ghost."

"I am very far from being a ghost, Margot, though there is not much flesh on my bones. How is Mademoiselle Brander? I hear she has not been well."

"She is as pale as you are, monsieur, but not so thin. She does nothing but sit quiet all day with her eyes wide open—she who was always so bright and active and had a smile for every one. I go out and cry often after going into her room. She has just gone into the parlor. You will find her alone there," she added, for Margot had always had her ideas as to the cause of Cuthbert's visits.

Mary was sitting at the open window and did not look round as Cuthbert entered.

"Well, Mary, is it actually you, doing nothing?" he said, cheerily.

She turned round with a start, and a flush of color swept across her face.

"How you startled me," she said. "I am glad indeed to see you. I did not think you would be out so soon. Surely it is very foolish of you coming so far."

"Still thinking you are a nurse, Mary," he laughed. "I can assure you I am very prudent, and I have been brought up here in a carriage—a carriage with live horses. Dr. Swinburne told me you had not got over the effects of your hard work, and that he had had to order you to take tonics, so you see instead of being a nurse you are a patient at present, while I am a free man. I came out of hospital yesterday morning, and we had a grand supper last night out of my hoards, which I found just as I had left them, which says wonders for the honesty of the Parisians in general, and for the self-denial of my friend René Caillard in particular."

"Why, I should have thought——" and she stopped, abruptly.

"What would you have thought, Miss Brander?"

"Oh, nothing."

"No, no, I cannot be put off in that way. You were going to say that you thought I should have distributed my stores long ago, or that I ought to have sent for them for the use of the hospital. I really ought to have done so. It would have been only fair, but in fact the idea never occurred to me. René had the keys of my rooms and I told him to use the stores as he liked, meaning for himself and for our comrades of the studio."

"I should have thought," she began again, and then, as before, hesitated, and then asked, abruptly, "Have you not something to tell me, Cuthbert—something that an old friend would tell to another? I have been expecting you to tell me all the time you were in the hospital, and have felt hurt you did not."

Cuthbert looked at her in surprise. There was a slight flush on her cheek and it was evident that she was deeply in earnest.

"Tell you something, Mary," he repeated. "I really don't know what you mean—no, honestly, I have not a notion."

"I don't wish to pry into your secrets," she said, coldly. "I learned them accidentally, but as you don't wish to take me into your confidence we will say no more about it."

"But we must say more about it," he replied. "I repeat I have no idea of what you are talking about. I have no secret whatever on my mind. By your manner it must be something serious, and I think I have a right to know what it is."

She was silent for a moment and then said—

"If you wish it I can have no possible objection to tell you. I will finish the question I began twice. I should have thought that you would have wished that your stores should be sent to the lady you are engaged to."

Cuthbert looked at her in silent surprise.

"My dear Mary," he said, gravely, at last, "either you are dreaming or I am. I understood that your reply to my question, the year before last, was as definite and as absolute a refusal as a man could receive. Certainly I have not from that moment had any reason to entertain a moment's doubt that you yourself intended it as a rejection."

"What are you talking about?" she asked, rising to her feet with an energy of which a few minutes before she would have deemed herself altogether incapable. "Are you pretending that I am alluding to myself, are you insulting me by suggesting that I mean that I am engaged to you?"

"All I say is, Mary, that if you do not mean that, I have not the most remote idea in the world what you do mean."

"You say that because you think it is impossible I should know," Mary retorted, indignantly, "but you are mistaken. I have had it from her own lips."

"That she was engaged to me?"

"She came to the hospital to see you the night you were brought in, and she claimed admittance on the ground that she was affianced to you."

Cuthbert's surprise changed to alarm as it flashed across him

that the heavy work and strain had been too much for the girl, and that her brain had given way.

"I think that there must be some mistake, Mary," he said, soothingly.

"There is no mistake," she went on, still more indignantly; "she came with your friend, René, and I knew her before she spoke, for I had seen her face in a score of places in your sketch-book, and you told me she was a model in your studio. It is no business of mine, Mr. Hartington, whom you are going to marry. I can understand, perhaps, your wish that the matter should remain for a time a secret, but I did not think when I told you that I knew it, you would have kept up the affectation of ignorance. I have always regarded you as being truthful and honorable beyond all things, and I am bitterly disappointed. I was hurt that you should not have given your confidence to me, but I did think when I told you that I knew your secret you would have manfully owned it, and not descended to a pretence of ignorance."

For a moment Cuthbert's face had expressed bewilderment, but as she went on speaking, a smile stole across his face. Mary noticed it and her voice and manner changed.

"I think, Mr. Hartington," she said, with great dignity, "you must see that it will be pleasanter for us both that this interview shall terminate."

He rose from his seat, took his hat off the table, and said, quietly—

"I have but one observation to make before I go. You have discovered, Miss Brander, that you made one mistake in your life. Has it never struck you that you might also have made a mistake this time? I think that our very long acquaintance might have induced you to hesitate a little before you assumed it as a certainty that your old acquaintance was acting in this way, and that for the sake of old times you might have given him the benefit of the doubt."

The strength that Mary's indignation had given her, deserted her suddenly. Her fingers tightened on the back of the chair by her side for support.

"How could there be any mistake," she asked, weakly, her vigorous attack now turned into a defence, more by his manner than his words, "when I heard her say so?"

"Sit down, child," he said, in his old authoritative manner. "You are not fit to stand."

She felt it would be a step towards defeat if she did so, but he brought up the chair in which she had before been sitting and placed it behind her, and quietly assisted her into it.

"Now," he went on, "you say you heard it from her lips. What did she say?"

"She said she insisted on going in to see you, and that as your affianced wife she had a right to do so."

"She said that, did she? That she was the affianced wife of Cuthbert Hartington?"

Mary thought for a moment.

"No, she did not use those words, at least, not that I can remember; but it was not necessary, I knew who she was. I have seen the sketches in your book, and there were several of them on the walls of your room. Of course I knew who she was speaking of, though she did not, so far as I can remember, use your name."

"Did it never occur to you, Miss Brander, that it was a natural thing one should have many sketches of the girl who always stood as a model in the studio, and that every student there would have his sketch-book full of them? Did you not know that there were three or four other wounded men of the same corps as myself in the hospital; that one at least was a fellow-student of mine, and also a foreigner, and that this young woman was just as likely to be asking to see him as to see me?"

An awful feeling of doubt and shame came with overpowering force over Mary Brander.

"No," she said, desperately, "I never thought of such a thing. Naturally I thought it was you, and there was no reason why it shouldn't be. You were perfectly free to please yourself, only I felt hurt that when you got better you did not tell me."

Her voice was so weak that Cuthbert poured some water into a glass and held it to her lips.

"Now, child," he went on in a lighter voice, "I am not going to scold you—you are too weak to be scolded. Some day I may scold you as you deserve. Not only is Minette—I told you her name before—nothing to me, but I dislike her as a passionate, dangerous young woman; capable, perhaps, of good, but certainly capable of evil. However, I regret to say that Arnold Dampierre, the man who was in the next bed to me, you know, does not see her in the same light, and I am very much afraid he will be fool enough to marry her. Actually, she did a few days later obtain permission to see him, and has, I believe, seen him several times since; but as he was moved out of your ward whilst I was battling with the fever, I have not seen her. Now don't cry, child, you have been a goose, but there is no harm done, and you ought to be glad to know that your old friend is not going to make a fool of himself; and he can still be regarded by you as truthful and honorable. Do you think I would have taken you round to my rooms if I had been going to make her their mistress?"

"Don't, don't!" the girl cried. "Don't say anything more, Cuthbert. I cannot bear it."

"I am not going to say any more. Madame de Millefleurs' horses must by this time be half-frozen, and her coachman be out of all patience, and I must be going. I shall come again as soon as I can, and I shall be very angry if I don't find you looking much more like yourself when I next come."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE belief that in a few hours the siege would come to an end was so general the next morning, that Cuthbert determined to lose no time in seeing Cumming. As soon as the way was open the man might take the opportunity to move off to some other hiding-place; and, therefore, instead of bringing out his canvases, as he had intended, Cuthbert decided to call on him at once. Having chartered one of the few remaining fiacres,

at an exorbitant rate, he drove to the house where he had seen Cumming enter, and went into the concierge.

"I want some information, my friend," he said, laying a five-franc piece on the table. "You have a foreigner lodging here?"

The man nodded.

"Monsieur Jackson is a good tenant," he said. "He pays well for any little services."

"How long has he been here?"

"He came just after war was declared."

"Has he taken his apartments for a long period?"

"He has taken them for a year, monsieur. I think he will take them permanently. I hope so, for he gives no trouble, and has never been out late once since he came here."

"I want to see him," Cuthbert said, "I believe he is an old acquaintance of mine."

"If you ring his bell he will open himself. He keeps an old woman as servant, but she has just gone out to do his shoping. He always take his meals at home. He is on the second floor—the door to the left."

Cuthbert went up and rang the bell. Cumming himself opened the door. He looked at his visitor inquiringly.

"You do not remember me, Mr. Cumming?" Cuthbert said, cheerfully. "I am not surprised, for I have but just recovered from a very serious wound. I will come in and sit down, if you don't mind; I want to have a chat with you. My name is Cuthbert Hartington!"

The man had given a violent start when his name was mentioned, and his face turned to an ashy pallor. He hesitated for a moment, and then, as Cuthbert entered, he closed the door behind him, and silently led the way into the sitting-room.

"I happened to see you in the street," Cuthbert went on, pleasantly, as he seated himself. "Of course, your beard has altered you a bit, and I could not at first recall your face, but it soon came back to me. It was a happy idea of yours shutting yourself up here when there was no chance of an extradition warrant being applied for. However, to-morrow or next day that little difficulty will be at an end. I thought I would come

and have a conversation with you, and naturally the course that I shall take will depend a good deal on the results. I may mention," he went on, taking a revolver from his pocket and laying it on the table before him, "that I thought it as well to bring this with me, for just at present I don't feel quite up to a personal tussle."

"What do you want to talk about?" the man asked, doggedly. "I may tell you at once that I placed what little money I got where it will never be found, and beyond sending me up for some years, there will be nothing to be gained by denouncing me."

"There might be some satisfaction though in seeing a man who has ruined you punished—at least there would be to some men. I don't know that there would be to me. It would depend upon circumstances. I am ready to believe that in those transactions of yours that brought the bank to ruin, you honestly believed that the companies you assisted would turn out well, and that things would come out right in the end. I do not suppose you were such a fool as to run the risk of ruin and penal servitude when you had a snug place, unless you had thought so; and, indeed, as the directors were as responsible as yourself for making those advances—although they were, of course, ignorant of the fact that you held a considerable interest in those companies—there was nothing actually criminal in those transactions. Therefore, it is only for that matter of your making off with the contents of the safe that you can be actually prosecuted. At any rate, I have no present intention of interfering in the affair, and you can remain here as Mr. Jackson up to the end of your life for what I care, if you will give me the information that I desire."

The look on the man's face relaxed.

"I will give you any information you desire, I have nothing to conceal. Of course, they can obtain a conviction against me for taking the money, but I should save them trouble by pleading guilty at once. Therefore, I don't see that I could harm myself in any way by answering any questions they may choose to ask me."

"I want to get to the bottom of what has all along been a mystery to me, and that is how my father came to take those shares, just at the moment when the bank was so shaky."

"That is more than I can tell you, Mr. Hartington. It has been a puzzle to myself."

"But they were your shares that were transferred to him."

"That is so, and the money came in useful enough, for I knew that the smash must take place soon, and that possibly I might not be able to lay my hands on much ready cash. However, I will tell you exactly how it came about. Brander, the lawyer came to me and said his client, Mr. Hartington, wanted fifty shares. I own I was astounded, for Brander knew perfectly well that things were in a very bad way. By the way he spoke I saw there was something curious about the affair, but as he put the screw on, and as much as hinted that if I did not follow his instructions he would blow the whole thing into the air, I made no objections, especially as he proposed that I should transfer some of my own shares. The transfer was drawn up in regular form. He brought it to me duly signed by your father.

"I noticed that his own clerks witnessed the signature, so I supposed it was done in the office. He made a point that I should get the transfer passed with some others without the attention of the directors being called to the matter. I got the transfer signed and sealed by two of the directors while there was a talk going on about other things, and they signed without looking at names. So far as I am concerned that was the beginning and ending of the matter. Oh, there was another point, the transfer was ante-dated three weeks. Of course, it might have been lying in Brander's office all the time. It was dated on the day after the previous board meeting, so that in the ordinary course it would not be passed until the next meeting, and it might very well have remained in Brander's hands until he knew that the directors were going to meet again. I have often wondered what Brander's game was, and of course I thought all the more of it when I saw that he had bought Fairclose. He was a crafty old fox, Brander, but I have never

been able to understand why he permitted your father to ruin himself."

Cuthbert remained silent for some time.

"Your explanation only thickens the mystery," he said. "I can no more understand his motive than you can. Brander's explanation of the affair to me was that my father insisted against his advice in buying the shares, as he did not believe in the rumors to the discredit of the bank. He was a strong county man, as you may know, and thought that when people heard that he had taken shares, it would tend to restore confidence in the concern. Now, as, on the contrary, Brander seems to have taken special pains to prevent the transaction being known even by the directors, it is clear that his explanation was a lie, that for some reasons of his own he wished to defeat my father's intentions. I think I must get you to put the statement you have made to me on paper, and to get it sworn before a public notary—at least I think that is the way out here."

"I have no objection to do that, but as it is my intention to continue to live here where I am now known as a resident and feel myself pretty safe, except from some chance meeting like that of yours, I would rather that it should be done somewhere else."

"That is reasonable enough," Cuthbert agreed. "I expect the gates will be open in a day or two, and I shall go to England at once and try to get to the bottom of this matter. I should think the Prussians will let Englishmen pass out at once. Would you mind going with me as far as Calais? We can get the document sworn to in legal form and you can then come back here."

"I would rather go to Brussels," the man said.

"No doubt that would be best," Cuthbert agreed. "It might be as well that it should not be done at any place in France. Well, Mr. Cumming, your secret is safe with me. I will call on you again as soon as I find that we can get across to Brussels."

"I shall be ready whenever you are, Mr. Hartington. Of course, I don't quite see what you will do with this document, but I am perfectly ready to sign it."

"I don't see either. I shall want to think the matter over. At present I feel in a complete fog."

"I can quite understand that. I may tell you that Brander puzzled me a good deal the last two or three months before the bank stopped. He spent two or three hours going into the affairs with me. He knew generally how matters stood, but he had never gone thoroughly into them before. When he had done he said, 'I knew you were in a very bad way before but I did not think it was as bad as this. I want to see whether the smash could not be postponed. Things have been bad lately, but I think they are improving, and some of these affairs that you have been bolstering up might pull round if you had time given you."

"I did not see much chance of that. However, I did not say so—in fact, I wanted to hear what he was driving at. He went on, after looking through the list of mortgages we held, 'Of course, Cumming, it is to your interest to hold on here as long as possible, and I may have mine for wishing the bank to keep its doors open for some little time yet. It would never do for you to be going into the market to try and transfer any of these mortgages, but I have clients in London who would, I think, take some of them over. Of course, I have taken good care that in no cases did the bank lend more than fifty per cent. of the full value of the lands, and the mortgages are all as safe as if they were on consols. So if you will give me a fortnight's notice when there is anything pressing coming forward, I think I can manage to get twenty thousand pounds' worth of these mortgages taken off our hands altogether. I might repeat the operation three or four times, and could get it done quietly and with no fuss. In that way the bank could be kept going for a good many months, which would give time for things to take a turn. In case of anything like a run taking place, which I think is unlikely, I could let you have fifteen thousand of my own in a few hours. I have it standing at call and could run up to town and bring it down by the next train.'

"Why he should make such an offer as this puzzled me, but his reason for wanting to prop the bank up was no business of

mine, and there was no doubt if he could get fifty or sixty thousand pounds' worth of mortgages taken off our hands, it would enable us to hold on for some time. He did, in fact, get one batch of twenty thousand pounds' worth transferred, but about a month before we stopped he came in one morning and said, 'I am sorry to tell you, Cumming, that I have heard from the people in town I had relied on to help us about those mortgages, and they tell me they have undertaken the financing of a contractor for a South American railway, and that, therefore, they are not inclined at present to sink money farther in mortgages, so I am afraid, as far as I am concerned, things here must take their course,' and, as you know, they did take their course. Naturally, I did not believe Brander's story, but it was evident he had, when he made the offer, some reason for wanting the bank to keep its doors open for a time, and that that reason, whatever it was, had ceased to operate when he withdrew the offer."

"I don't see that that part of the business has any bearing upon my affair," Cuthbert said, "beyond helping to show Brander was playing some deep game of his own."

"I don't know, Mr. Hartington. However, I will think the matter over, and we shall have opportunities for discussing it again on our way to Brussels."

"I almost wish I had let the matter alone altogether," Cuthbert said to himself as he drove back to his lodgings. "I wanted to clear up what seemed a mystery, and I find myself plunged much deeper into a fog than ever. Before I only dimly suspected Brander of having for some reason or other permitted my father to take these shares when a word from him would have dissuaded him from doing so. I now find that the whole transaction was carried out in something like secrecy, and that so far from my father's name being used to prop up the bank, it was almost smuggled into the list of shareholders, and that even the directors were kept in ignorance of the transfer of Cumming's shares to him. The whole business has a very ugly look, though what the motive of this secrecy was, or why Brander should be willing to allow, if not to assist, in my

father's ruin is more than I can conceive. The worst of the matter is, he is Mary's father. Yes, I wish to goodness that I had left the whole business alone."

Cuthbert had given his address to Cumming, and to his surprise the man called on him that evening.

"You did not expect to see me again to-day, Mr. Hartington," he said, when he entered, "but thinking the matter over a fresh light has struck me, and I felt obliged to come round to tell you. I hope I am not disturbing you."

"No, I have been so worried over the confounded business, that I have given up going to some friends as I had promised, as I didn't feel that I could talk about indifferent matters."

"Well, Mr. Hartington, my idea will surprise you; it will seem incredible to you, and it almost seems so to myself, and yet it all works in so that I can't help thinking it is near the mark. I believe that your father never signed that transfer at all—that his signature was in fact a forgery."

"The deuce you do," Cuthbert exclaimed; "what on earth put such an idea into your head? Why, man, the idea is absurd! If it was a forgery it must have been done by Brander, and what possible motive could he have had for such an act?"

"That I don't pretend to say. If I could see that, I should say it was a certainty, but I own the absence of motive is the weak point of my idea. In all other respects the thing works out. In the first place, although your father was not a man of business, it was singular that he should go out of his way to take shares in the bank, when he must have known that in the case of things going wrong his whole property would be involved. No doubt that idea must have occurred to yourself."

"Certainly; it astonished me beyond measure that he should have done such a thing. I wrote to Brander at once hoping for some sort of explanation. I was at the time satisfied with that that he gave me, but it was, as you know, because the matter, on reflection, has since seemed so extraordinary that I came to you to try and get some further information about it,"

"You saw your father after this supposed transaction, Mr. Hartington?"

"Yes, I was down there for a fortnight."

"And he did not mention it to you?"

"Not a word!"

"Was it his habit to talk on business matters with you?"

"He never had any business matters except about the estate, and he generally told me if he had any difficulty about his rents, and discussed any improvements he thought of making, but beyond that there was never any question of money. Sometimes he would say 'My balance at the bank is rather larger than usual, Cuthbert, and if you like an extra hundred you can have it,' which I never did."

"Well, of course it is only negative evidence that he made no allusion to his having purchased those shares, still, as he was in the habit of speaking to you about things, he might very naturally have said 'I have been investing some spare cash in the shares of the bank here.'"

"Yes, I should have thought he would have done so!"

"You don't think he would have abstained from telling you, because he might have thought you would have considered it a rash speculation."

"Certainly not," Cuthbert said, warmly, "I should no more have thought of criticising anything he chose to do with his money, than I should of flying."

"Well, at any rate, you may take it that there is no proof whatever that Mr. Hartington was aware of this transaction at the time of your visit, nor that he was aware of it up to the time of his death." Cuthbert nodded. "Now let us suppose that this transfer was a forgery, and was committed by Brander, what course would he naturally pursue? Exactly that which he followed, namely, to get it placed on the register without its being noticed by the directors. These men were all personal friends of your father's. Knowing to some extent, though I admit without realizing the peril, that the bank was seriously involved, they might have refused to register the transfer until they had privately remonstrated with him, especially as I was

the vendor, even had they not done this one or other of them would almost certainly have alluded to the subject the first time they met him. Brander might have intended later on to re-transfer the shares to some bogus purchaser, but at any rate, if he knew your father was in bad health he would have wanted to keep the bank from putting up its shutters until after his death. You will remark that he did assist in that way, while your father was alive, and that almost immediately after his death, he declined to support the bank farther. What his motive can have been in all this I own that I cannot imagine, but, given a motive, my supposition appears to be perfectly feasible. That the motive, whatever it was, must have been a very strong one, I admit, for in the first place he was running the risk of being detected of forgery, and in the second must have been three hundred pounds out of pocket, for that was the amount of the check he handed to me."

"It was his own check, then, and not my father's?"

"Yes, he said he had rents in hand and therefore paid it out of them, which seemed natural enough. But how about the signatures of the two clerks?"

"They may be forgeries too, or possibly, knowing your father's signature, they may have signed as a matter of course without actually seeing him affix it. You will admit that all this is possible."

"It seems possible enough," Cuthbert said, "but what motive could there have been on Brander's part? He could never have run such a risk merely to gratify any special fancy he may have had for Fairclose."

"Certainly not, Mr. Hartington. Jeremiah Brander has not a particle of sentiment in his composition. Of course, as he was the solicitor of the company, I made it my business to study the man pretty closely, and I came to the conclusion that he was a rank humbug, but that he was a humbug because it paid him to be one."

"That is quite my own idea of him, but that does not help us in the slightest towards an explanation as to why he should risk everything when he had nothing whatever to gain by it."

"No, I feel that difficulty myself," Cumming said, stroking his chin thoughtfully, "I admit that beats me altogether. By the way," he said, suddenly, "I saw in the official report that he had a mortgage of fifteen thousand on the estate. Do you mind telling me how that came about? It may possibly help us."

"I have not the least idea. I never heard of the existence of the mortgage until Brander wrote to me himself about it at the time he bought the estate; but he gave me an explanation that perfectly satisfied me at the time."

Mr. Cumming looked at him inquiringly.

"It was an explanation," Cuthbert said, after a pause, "that closed my lips altogether on the subject. But in the present strange state of affairs I do not know that I need abstain from mentioning it to you. Brander explained that my father said that he required it to close up a matter that had long been troubling him. I gathered from the way he put it that it was some folly with a woman in his early years, and I need not say that respect for my father's memory prevented me from pursuing the matter further. Brander said that he had himself advanced the money on the mortgage in order that the business should be done privately and without any third person being cognizant of it."

Cumming sat thoughtfully for a minute without speaking and then he leapt suddenly to his feet and put his hand on Cuthbert's shoulder.

"You take my word for it, Mr. Hartington, that mortgage was just as much a bogus affair as the transfer. The one supplies the motive we have been looking for for the other. The failure of the bank brought Fairclose into the market, and not only did Brander purchase it for ten or fifteen thousand below its value at any other time, but he gained another fifteen thousand by this bogus mortgage. There is your motive for the forgery of your father's name on the transfer."

"I cannot believe it," Cuthbert said, slowly. "Brander could never be such a scoundrel as that. Besides, of course, the men who wound up the affairs of the bank would look

closely into the mortgage. Whether it was real or whether it was a forgery, Brander would equally have obtained the money at my father's death, so your supposition of a motive fails."

"I do not know. Had the claim been made direct to you, you would naturally have got some sharp lawyer to investigate it, and, it would have been inquired into a good deal more closely than the official liquidator probably took the trouble to do. A mortgage, of which no one knows anything until after the mortgagor's death, would always be looked upon with suspicion, and some collateral proofs would be required. Of course, I may be wrong altogether, but it would be well for you to ascertain whether the official liquidator did take any steps to obtain such evidence."

"That I will certainly do," Cuthbert said. "I did write to him at the time, and I am bound to say his answer seemed entirely satisfactory and straightforward. He said that Mr. Brander had given proof that he did draw a check for the amount of the mortgage on the day on which it was executed, and although he did not show that interest had been specifically paid by checks from my father, there were receipts found among my father's papers for the half-yearly payments of interest. These were, it seemed, settled, when Brander, who collected his rents, made up his accounts with him."

"That all seems straightforward enough, Mr. Hartington, and as long as there was no ground for suspicion would doubtless pass muster, but it is certainly worth while inquiring int o."

Cuthbert sat silent for some time.

"After all the whole of this is but the barest suspicion," he said. "The only thread of fact being that the transfer was kept secret from the directors, of which no doubt Brander will be able to give some plausible explanation, and his character stands so high at Abchester that the question, if raised, would be scouted as an atrocious libel upon him. But supposing that we had absolute proof, I don't see how I should stand. If my father was not a shareholder in the bank its creditors had, of course, no claim whatever on his property, but as the property

has in fact been sold and the proceeds divided long ago who should I have to go against?"

"That is a matter for the lawyers, Mr. Hartington, but I imagine you would not have to go back on the creditors to the bank. You would simply prove that the bank was not in a position to give a title, and that, therefore, the sale was null and void. It would be argued, of course, that you gave the title, as I suppose you signed the deeds, and your plea would be that the signature was obtained from you by fraud."

"I did not sign the deeds," Cuthbert said. "Brander pointed out that, as I had not received any rents or profits, it would be better that I should stand out of it altogether, and that the will should not be proved, as otherwise the death dues would be charged upon it, and therefore it remained in the hands of the executors of whom he was one, and it was they who gave the titles."

"Whoever gave the titles, I should say that, as the bank had no claim whatever on the property, if the transfer was a forgery, the sale would be declared void and the loss would fall on the purchaser. This would, in the case of anyone but Brander, have been very hard, but would, in his, be in strict accordance with justice. However, this is a matter for which, of course, you will require the best legal opinion, but all that is for after consideration. The great difficulty, and I grant that I don't see how it is to be got over, is to prove that your father's signature to the transfer was a forgery. The first step is to ascertain whether the attesting witnesses were actually present as they should have been when your father's signature was affixed."

"I will clear up that point anyhow," Cuthbert said; "I will go straight from Brussels to England, see the clerks, and hear what they have to say on the matter. If they were present and saw my father sign the transfer there is an end to the whole affair."

The other nodded.

"I would not mind wagering a hundred pounds to one that you find that they were not present."

"Well, that will soon be settled, for I have heard this afternoon that the conditions of surrender were signed this morning and that to-morrow the forts are to be given over, and an armistice will commence. In that case I suppose that foreigners will meet with no difficulty in obtaining passes to leave at once. Well, I am very much obliged to you for the suggestion you have made, Mr. Cumming, though I have, I confess, very little faith indeed that anything will come of it, and just at present it seems to me that I would much rather the matter had remained as it was."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE next morning Cuthbert drove to Madame Michaud's.

"You are looking better, Mary," he said, as he entered; "why, you have got quite a pretty color in your cheeks."

"Don't talk nonsense, please. I am better, a great deal better, but it is no wonder I have a color, I have been blushing with shame at my own folly ever since you were here."

"If you never do anything more foolish than that, you will get through life well enough. Appearances were against me, and you jumped at conclusions a little too fast. Let us say no more about it."

"You are not looking so well, I think, Cuthbert."

"No. I have been a little bothered."

"Have you seen that man Cumming?" she asked, quickly.

"Yes," he answered, in some surprise, "though what should make you associate him with my being bothered I don't know."

"You said that you were going to see him, and somehow, I don't know why, I have been rather worrying over it. Was the interview satisfactory, did you learn what you wanted?"

"Not altogether," he said, "but it is all a matter of conjecture, Mary, and I own that it has worried me a bit, and, indeed, I am sorry I went to him at all. However, as it is business

and ladies are not good at business, suppose we talk of something else."

Mary made no reply, but sat looking at him while she twisted her fingers nervously before her. "May I ask one question, Cuthbert?"

"Yes, if you like, but I don't promise to answer it?"

"Do you think that there is any blame attached to my father?"

Cuthbert was startled. He had certainly not expected this question.

"What on earth should put that idea into your head, Mary?"

"I don't know," she replied, "but it has always struck me as so strange that he should not have prevented Mr. Hartington from buying those shares. I don't know much of business, but I have thought a great deal about it, and it has always seemed a strange affair to me, and I have worried a great deal over it since he bought the house. That is one reason why I hate going there."

"Perhaps your father was not quite so prudent in the matter as he might have been, Mary," Cuthbert said, trying to speak lightly, though he found it difficult to do so with the girl's earnest eyes fixed on him, "but even of that I am not sure. Now, suppose we change the subject again—it seems that we are to hit on difficult subjects this morning. The gates will probably be opened, at any rate to the foreigners, in a day or two. Are you thinking of going home to prepare yourself for taking up your vocation as a nurse?"

"Not yet," she replied, "there is no hurry for that, and it will be some time before the country is settled."

"You are sure that you have not changed your mind again?"

"No, why should I?"

"I thought perhaps you might have done so, and might possibly be inclined towards the vocation you so scornfully repudiated when I suggested it before. I intended to ask you yesterday, but it would not have been fair when you were so weak and shaken."

The girl had glanced at him and had then flushed hotly.

"I don't know—I am not sure—what you mean."

"And I am sure that you know very well, Mary, that I mean the vocation of taking care of me, which you repudiated with scorn—in fact refused to entertain it seriously at all. Of course there may have been other grounds, but the one you laid stress on was that I was lazy and purposeless, and that if you ever did take up such a vocation it would be to take care of some one you could respect. I don't say for an instant that I approach to that altitude, but at least I may say I am no longer an idler, that I have worked hard, and that I have every hope of success. You see, too, that I want you more than I did then. I am a poor artist and not the heir to a good estate. But as you are fond of sacrificing yourself, that may not be altogether an objection. At any rate, dear, I think I shall be able to keep you comfortably. I am not sure I should ever have mustered up courage enough to have spoken on this subject again, had it not been for yesterday. But that gave me a little hope that you really had come to care about me a little, and that possibly you might be willing to change your plans again in my favor."

"I did not think you really loved me then," she said. "I thought it was just a passing fancy."

"You see it was not, dear. All these months that I have worked hard, it was partly from the love of art and with the hope that I might be a really great artist, but at the bottom of it all along has been the thought of you and the determination that in one respect I would become worthy of you."

"Don't talk like that, Cuthbert. I know now that I was a headstrong, conceited girl, thinking I was strong when I was as weak as water. You were right when you said I was not yet a woman, for I had never found that I had a heart. It is I who am unworthy."

"Well, it is no question of worthiness now. The question is do you love me as I love you."

"Are you sure you do, Cuthbert? I have thought all these months that you had taken me at my word, and that it was but as a friend you regarded me. Are you sure it is not gratitude

for what little I did for you in the hospital! Still more that it is not because I showed my feelings so plainly the day before yesterday, and that it is from pity as well as gratitude that you speak now."

"Then you were really a little jealous, Mary?"

"You know I was. It was shameful of me to show it, so shameful that I have hated myself since. I know that after doing so, I ought to say no—no a thousand times. I love you, Cuthbert, I love you; but I would rather never marry you than feel it was out of pity that you took me. That would be too hard to bear."

They were both standing now.

"You are talking nonsense, child," he said, tenderly, as he took her hand. "You know I love you truly. Surely my pictures must have told you that. Honestly now, did you not feel that it was so?"

"I did not know you loved me then, Cuthbert. There were other things, you know, that made me feel it could not be so, but then that for the first time I really knew——" and she stopped.

"That you loved me, darling?" and he drew her closer to him. "Now, you gave me a straightforward answer before—I insist on as straightforward a one now."

And this time the answer was not, No.

"Mind," he said a few minutes afterwards, "your vocation is definitely fixed at last, Mary, and there must be no more changing."

"As if you did not know there won't be," she said, saucily. And then suddenly altering her tone she went on, "Now, Cuthbert, you will surely tell me what you would not before. What did you find out? It is something about my father, I am sure."

"Let me think before I answer you," he said, and then sat silent for two or three minutes. "Well," he said, at last, "I think you have a right to know. You may be sure that in any case I should before, for your sake, have done everything in my power towards arranging things amicably with him. Now, of course, that feeling is vastly stronger, and for my own sake as well as yours I should abstain from any action against him.

Mind, at present I have only vague suspicions, but if those suspicions turn out true, it will be evident that your father has been pursuing a very tortuous policy, to put it no stronger, in order to gain possession of Fairclose. I cannot say definitely as yet what I shall do, but at present I incline to the opinion that I shall drop the matter altogether."

"Not for my sake, Cuthbert," she said, firmly. "I have always felt uneasy about it. I can scarcely say why, but I am afraid it is so. Of course I know my father better than people in general do. I have known that he was not what he seemed to be. It has always been my sorest trouble, that we have never got on well together. He has never liked me, and I have not been able to respect him. I know that if he has done anything absolutely wrong—it seems terrible that I should even think such a thing possible—but if it has been so—I know you will not expose him."

"We will not talk any more about it, dear," Cuthbert interrupted; "it is all the vaguest suspicion, so let us put it aside altogether now. Just at present I am a great deal too happy to give as much as a thought to unpleasant matters. We have to attend to the business of the hour, and you have the two years of love of which I have been deprived to make up for."

"I am very, very glad, Cuthbert, that I was not in love with you then."

"Why?"

"Because we should have started all wrong. I don't think I should ever have come to look up to you and honor you as I do now. I should never have been cured of my silly ideas, and might even have thought that I had made some sort of sacrifice in giving up my plans. Besides, then you were what people call a good match, and now no one can think that it is not for love only."

"Well, at any rate, Mary, we shall have between us enough to keep us out of the workhouse even if I turn out an absolute failure."

"You know you won't do that."

"I hope not, but at any rate one is liable to illness, to loss of

sight, and all sorts of other things, and as we have between us four hundred a year we can manage very comfortably, even if I come to an end of my ardor for work and take to idleness again."

"I am not afraid of that," she smiled, "after painting those two pictures, you could not stop painting. I don't think when anyone can do good work of any sort, he can get tired of it, especially when the work is art. My only fear is that I shan't get my fair share of your time."

"Well, if I see you getting jealous, Mary, I have the means of reducing you to silence by a word."

"Have you, indeed? Will you please tell me what word is that?"

"I shall just say, Minette!"

Mary's color flamed up instantly.

"If you do, sir; if you do——" and then stopped.

"Something terrible will come of it, eh. Well, it was not fair."

"It was quite fair, Cuthbert. It will always be a painful recollection to me, and I hope a lesson too."

"It will not be a painful recollection to me," he laughed. "I think I owe Minette a debt of gratitude. Now, what do you say to taking a drive, Mary? Horse-flesh has gone down five hundred per cent. in the market in the last three days, and I was able to get a fiacre on quite reasonable terms."

"Is it waiting here still? How extravagant, Cuthbert, it must have been here nearly an hour."

"I should say I have been here over two hours and a quarter according to that clock."

"Dear me, what will Madame Michaud think? Shall I tell her, Cuthbert?"

"I don't care a snap what she thinks. You can do just as you like about telling her. Perhaps it will be as well, as I intend to see a good deal of you in the next few days. But if you write home don't say anything about it. There are reasons which we can talk over another time, why it will be best to keep it to ourselves for a time."

Mary nodded. That he wished a thing was quite sufficient for her at the present moment.

"Do you want me to go out with you?" she asked.

"Just as you like. I believe that as a rule a ring has to be purchased at the conclusion of an arrangement such as we have just entered into, and I thought you might just as well chose one yourself."

"Oh, I would much rather not," she exclaimed, "and besides, I think for to-day I would rather sit quiet and think it all over and realize how happy I am."

"Well, for to-day you shall have your own way, Mary, but you have been doing a good deal more thinking than is good for you, and after to-day we must go out for a good walk regularly. You see we have both to get up our strength. I had quite forgotten I had anything the matter with me, and you only wanted rousing, dear. The doctor said as much to me, and you know, after all, happiness is the best tonic."

"Then I must be perfectly cured already, Cuthbert, but remember you must take care of yourself. The best of tonics won't set any one up at once who has had a real illness as you have had. You want something more substantial. Good strong soups and roast beef are the essentials in your case. Remember, sir, I have been your nurse and mean to continue so till your cure is complete. You will come again to-morrow, Cuthbert?"

"Of course, dear. Now about that ring. I have observed you never wear one. Have you one you can lend me, or must I measure with a piece of thread?"

"I will get you one, Cuthbert. I am not without such a possession although I have never worn one. I looked upon it as a female vanity," she added, with a laugh, "in the days when I thought myself above such things. What a little fool you must have thought me, Cuthbert?"

The next morning when Cuthbert came Mary had her things on in readiness to go out with him, and after a short delay to admire and try on the ring, they set out together.

"I did not tell you yesterday, Mary," Cuthbert said, after

they had walked a short distance, "that as soon as the arrangements for foreigners to leave the town are settled, I am going to Brussels with Cumming. He is going to make an affidavit, and this he cannot do here, as, if I should have occasion to use the document, it would be the means of enabling the police to trace him here and to demand his extradition. After that I shall go on to England to make some inquiries that are essential. I will give you all particulars if you wish it, but I think it will be very much better that you shall know nothing about the matter; it may turn out to be nothing at all; it may on the other hand be extremely important. It is a painful business anyhow, but in any case I think it will be much the best that you should know nothing about it. You can trust me, can you not?"

"Altogether," she said, "and certainly I would rather know nothing about it. But mind, Cuthbert, you must do what you think is right and best without any question about me. If you have been wronged you must right yourself, and I am sure that in doing so you will do it as gently and kindly as possible."

"I will try to do so," he said. "At present, as I told you, the suspicions are very vague and rest entirely upon the statement Cumming has made. If those suspicions should be verified, a great wrong has been done and that wrong must be righted, but that can no doubt be arranged without publicity or scandal. The reason why I do not wish you to say a word about our engagement is, that were it known it would tie my hands terribly and render it so impossible for me to take any strong ground, that I should be altogether powerless."

"Do entirely as you think best, Cuthbert. Of course, beyond the fact that perhaps something wrong may have been done, I have not an idea what it can be, and I do not want to know, unless it must be told me. How long are you likely to be away and do you think you are fit to travel?"

"There is no great fatigue in travelling," he said. "I can't say how long I shall be, not long I hope. You may be sure that I shall not be longer than I can possibly help."

"I shall miss you dreadfully, but of course if you think it necessary, you must go. Besides," she said, saucily, "if you

are in no hurry about me I know you will be anxious to get back to finish your pictures. No, Cuthbert, I really can't have that. There are people in sight."

"I don't care if there are," he laughed.

"I do, very much. Whoever heard of such a thing? What would they think of me?"

"I did not know that you cared what people thought of you, Mary."

"Not about some things, perhaps, but there are limits, you know."

A week later, duly provided with passes, Cuthbert and Cumming made their way in a carriage to the Belgian frontier, and then went on by train to Brussels, where, on the day after their arrival, Cumming drew up and signed a statement with reference to the details of his transference of the shares to Mr. Hartington, and swore to its contents before a Belgian legal official.

"I shall stay here for a few days," he said to Cuthbert, as the latter started the next morning for England. "I am quite safe for the present, and after a long course of horse-flesh I really cannot tear myself away from decent living, until Paris is re-victualled, and one can live there in comfort again. I wish you every success in your search. The more I think of it the more convinced I am that we are not far wrong as to the manner in which Brander has got hold of your estate."

Cuthbert, on arriving in London, took up his quarters at the Charing Cross Hotel. On the morning after his arrival he wrote a letter to Dr. Edwardes, at Abchester.

"My Dear Doctor,—I have just returned from Paris, where I have been shut up for the last four months. I do not care about coming down to Abchester at present. I suppose I have not quite got over my soreness over matters in general, but for reasons which I need not enter into, I want to know if Brander's clerks, who were with him when I was last there, are still with him in his office, and, if not, where they are employed. I do not know anyone else to write to on the subject,

and I am sure you will not mind taking the trouble in the matter for me."

The answer came back by return of post.

"My Dear Cuthhert,—I was very glad to hear of you again. I have asked Brander from time to time about you, and he always says that he has not heard from you for months, and though your letter says nothing beyond the fact that you are alive, I was glad to get it. I hope next time you write you will give me full details about yourself, and that ere long you will make up your mind to come down. I need not say that we shall be delighted to put you up when you do come. I should imagine you would not care to go to Fairclose. Now as to your question. Harford, the elder of the two clerks, left the office here very shortly after you went away. Levison, the younger, is still here. I put myself in the way of meeting him as he went to the office this morning. I stopped and chatted with him for a minute or two, and asked him carelessly how Mr. Harford was and whether he ever heard from him. He said he heard occasionally and that he was well. 'By the way, where is he working now?' I asked, 'I know he went up to a firm in town.' 'Oh, yes, he is with Barrington and Smiles, of Essex Street. He is getting on very well there, I believe. He is head of their conveyancing branch. I wish I could drop into as good a billet, Doctor. I should be very glad of a change.' So much for that business. Things are getting on pretty much the same up at the old place. Brander still comes up to his office for an hour or so every day. I don't think he cares much for the county gentleman's life. I fancy Mrs. B. is rather a disappointed woman. The fact is there was a good deal of feeling in the county as to Brander's connection with the bank. Almost everyone was let in more or less, you know, for the depositors have only got eight shillings in the pound so far, and I don't suppose they will ever get much more. There is an idea that Brander ought to have found out what was going on, and indeed that he must have known a good deal about it, and that at any rate what he did know should have been ample to have

rendered it his duty to warn your father against taking shares so short a time before the smash. His purchase of Fairclose did not improve matters, and so far from their taking your father's place in the county, I may say without being absolutely cut they are much more out of it than they were before. However, when you come down I will give you all the local gossip."

It was late in the afternoon when Cuthbert received the letter and he at once went to Essex Street. Several clerks were writing in the office. A lad came forward to ask him his business.

"I want to speak for a moment to Mr. Harford."

The lad went up to one of the desks and the clerk came forward.

"I don't know whether you remember me," Cuthbert said, "my name is Hartington."

"I remember you very well, Mr. Hartington, though you are changed a good deal."

"I have had a sharp illness, but I am getting over it now. I particularly wished to speak to you about a matter in connection with my father's affairs. I am staying at the Charing Cross Hotel and should feel very much obliged if, when you leave here, you would come round for a few minutes."

"With pleasure, sir, but I shall not get away till seven."

"That will do very well," Cuthbert said. "I would not have troubled you had it not been important."

A few minutes past seven the clerk was shown into Cuthbert's room. After asking him to take a chair Cuthbert said—

"As you are aware, Mr. Harford, my loss of the Fairclose estates arose from the unfortunate circumstances of my father having taken a few shares in the Abchester and County Bank. The matter has always been a puzzle to me. I have been abroad for the last eighteen months, and now, having returned, am anxious to get to the bottom of the matter if I can. The transfer of the shares from Cumming, the manager of the bank, to my father, was signed at Mr. Brander's office, I fancy. At any rate, you and Mr. Levison were the attesting witnesses to my father's signature. Have you any memory of the transaction, and would you object to tell what took place?"

"I remember about the transfer, Mr. Hartington, because, when the crash came, everything connected with it was talked over. In point of fact, we did not see Mr. Hartington's signature actually attached. He called at the office one day, and just after he had left Mr. Brander called us in and said, 'Please witness Mr. Hartington's signature.' Of course, we both knew it very well and witnessed it. I did not notice the names on the body of the transfer, though, of course, I knew from the appearance of the document what it was, but Mr. Brander just pointed out where we were to sign and we signed. The only thing I noticed was that as I wrote my eye fell on the top line, and I saw that it was dated ten days earlier."

"Was that unusual?"

"No, documents are often dated at the time they are drawn up, although they may not be signed for some days later. Of course it is not exactly regular, but it often happens. A form is filled up and one or other of the parties may be away or unable to sign. I happened to notice it, but it did not strike me in any way."

"And were you often called upon to attest signatures in this way without seeing them written?"

"There was nothing unusual in it. As a general rule we were called into the room when a signature had to be witnessed, but it occasionally happened, in the case where it was a well-known client and we were perfectly acquainted with the signature, that we did not sign until he had left the office."

"Do you remember if such a thing ever happened any other time in the case of my father!"

"Only once, I think, and that was afterwards. We signed then as witnesses to his signature to a legal document. I don't know what its nature was. It was done in the same manner directly Mr. Hartington had driven away."

"It might have been a mortgage deed."

"It might have been, sir, but as I saw only the last page of it, and as there were but three or four lines of writing at the top of the page, followed by the signatures, I have no idea even of the nature of the document."

"May I ask if you have left the office at Abchester on pleasant terms with Mr. Brander and his partner, for, of course, you know that he still takes an interest in the firm."

"Oh, yes, it is still carried on as Brander and Jackson, and Brander still goes down there for an hour or two every day. Yes, I left on pleasant terms enough, that is to say, I left of my own free will. I had for some time wished to come up to London, and hearing through a friend in this office of a vacancy at Barrington and Smiles, I applied and was fortunate enough to get it."

Cuthbert sat silent for a time. So far the answers he had received tallied precisely with Cumming's theory. He did not see how he could carry the inquiry farther here at present. The clerk, who was watching him closely, was the first to speak.

"I own, Mr. Hartington, that I do not in the slightest degree understand the gist of your questions, but I can well imagine that at the present moment you are wondering whether it would be safe to ask farther. I will, therefore, tell you at once that one of my reasons for leaving Mr. Brander's employment was that I did not like his way of doing business, nor did I like the man himself. The general opinion of him was that he was a public-spirited and kind-hearted man. I can only say that our opinion of him in the office was a very different one. He was a hard man, and frequently when pretending to be most lenient to tenants on the estates to which he was agent, or to men on whose lands he held mortgages, he strained the law to its utmost limits. I will not say more than that, but I could quote cases in which he put on the screw in a way that was to my mind most absolutely unjustifiable, and I had been for a very long time trying to get out of his office before the opportunity came. I may also say, Mr. Hartington, that I had the highest respect for your father. He always had a kind word when he came into the office, and regularly at Christmas he handed Levison and myself a check for ten pounds each, for, as he said, the trouble his business gave us. I tell you this in order that you may feel you can safely repose any confidence in me, and that my advice will be wholly at your service if you should think fit

to give me your confidence in this matter, whatever it may be. But at the same time I must say it would be still better if you put yourself in the hands of some respectable firm of solicitors. I do not suggest my own principals more than others, although few men stand higher in the profession."

"There are reasons against my laying the matter before any firm of solicitors, and the chief of these is that my hands are tied in a peculiar manner, and that I am unable to carry it through to its natural sequence, but I will very thankfully accept your offer and will frankly tell you the nature of my suspicions, for they are nothing more than suspicions. I may first say that the news that my father was a shareholder in the Abchester Bank astounded me. For a time, I put it down to one of those sudden impulses that are unaccountable, but I may tell you, and here my confidence begins, that I have come across Cumming, the bank manager, and from him have obtained some curious particulars of this transaction—particulars that have excited my suspicions.

"You wondered why I asked you those questions. I will tell you. You did not see my father affix his signature to either of those documents. The one being certainly the transfer of some of Cumming's shares to him. The other being, as I believe, the mortgage that, as you doubtless heard, Mr. Brander held over my father's estate. How could you tell those two signatures were not clever forgeries?"

Mr. Harford gave a start of surprise.

"God bless me, sir," he exclaimed, "such an idea never entered my mind."

"That I can quite understand," Cuthbert said, quietly, "but you must admit it is possible."

"But in that case," the clerk said, after a pause, "Brander himself must have been the forger, and surely that is not possible. I fancy I know Mr. Brander pretty well, but I should never have dreamt him capable of forgery. Not because I have a high opinion of his honesty, but because I believe him to be a cautious man, and besides I do not see what possible interest he could have had in ruining your father by putting his name

on to the register of shareholders. Even if he had an interest in so doing the risk of detection would be frightful, for not only would the matter be known to the directors, but, as you are aware, any shareholder has a right on the payment of a nominal fee to inspect the list of shareholders."

"Precautions were taken against this," Cuthbert said. "Just glance through this paper, which has been signed and sworn to by Cumming in proper form at Brussels."

Mr. Harford ran his eye over the document and then read it through carefully word by word.

"This is an extraordinary statement," he said, gravely, "do you believe it, Mr. Hartington?"

"I believe it implicitly. I had the man practically at my mercy. As you know, there is a warrant out for his arrest and a word from me would have set the police on his track and led to an application for his extradition. Therefore he had every motive for telling me the truth, and I am as certain as I can be, that he did so."

"If so there can be no question that Mr. Brander had some very strong reason indeed for preventing the knowledge of this transfer having ever been made from being known; but in any case it must have come out when the bank failed and of course he must have had a pretty accurate knowledge of the state of its affairs."

"Yes, but it man be that he had an equally accurate knowledge of the state of my father's health. That would account for what Cumming says as to his offer to bolster up the bank for a time, and for a retraction of that offer within a few days after my father's death."

"But why on earth should he have run all this risk merely to ruin you? He had no cause of enmity against you, had he, sir?"

"None,so far as I knew but now we come to the other document where you witnessed the signature without having seen it signed. If the signature on the transfer was a forgery, why not that on the mortgage, if it was the mortgage. If so you see the motive of the transfer. The smash of the bank brought a good many

estates into the market and they would consequently go cheap. Not only would he get it far below its value, but by reason of this pretended mortgage he would get a further drawback of £15,000 from the price he would pay as its purchase."

"Good heavens, Mr. Hartington! You take my breath away! Have you any reason whatever for believing that the mortgage was a bogus one?"

"None, beyond the fact that I was ignorant of its existence. I was so surprised that I not only wrote to Brander himself but to the official liquidator. The former said he had advanced the money at the urgent request of my father, who told him he wished to settle a very long standing claim upon him, and that he desired that the transaction should be kept an absolute secret. The official liquidator said he had gone carefully into the question of the mortgage, that it was of three years, standing, that the receipts Mr. Brander had given my father for the half-yearly interest on the money had been found among my father's papers, and that Brander had moreover produced a document, showing that he had sold securities to that amount, and had drawn the money from his bankers in town by a singled check for £15,000. Do you remember whether such a deed was ever drawn up in the office?"

"Certainly it was not, but you see that proves nothing, for it was to be kept a secret. Brander might have had it drawn up by some solicitor in London."

"I see that. Well, then, this deed, whatever it was that you witnessed, was that drawn up in the office?"

"No. I remember Levison and I talked it over and said it was curious that a deed between Brander and Mr. Hartington should not have been given to us as usual to be drawn up."

"You witnessed his signature then as well as that of my father?"

"Yes, I have a particular reason for remembering that, for I had sat down hurriedly after he had signed it, and dipping my pen too deeply in the ink, made a blot. It was no doubt a stupid thing to do, but Brander was so unreasonably angry about it, and blew me up so roughly that I made up my mind

there and then to stand it no longer, and wrote that very evening to my friend in my present office the letter which led to my getting the situation there two or three months later."

"That blot may be a most important one," Cuthbert said, "if it occurs on the mortgage deed on Fairclose, it is clear that document was not, as it professes on its face, executed three years earlier."

"That would be so indeed," Mr. Harford exclaimed, excitedly; "it would be a piece of evidence there would be no getting over, and that fact would account for Brander's anger, which seemed to me was out of all proportion to the accident. If you could show that the mortgage deed on which Brander claimed is really that document we witnessed, it would be all up with him. As to the receipts for the payments of interest they proved nothing as they were, of course, in Brander's own handwriting and were found where he put them. If you could find out that Brander had knowledge of Mr. Hartington's state of health about the time that transfer was produced you would strengthen your case. It seems to me that he must have got an inkling of it just before he filled up the transfer, and that he ante-dated it a week so that it would appear to have been signed before he learnt about his illness. I can see no other reason for the ante-dating it."

"That may have been the reason," Cuthbert agreed. "It was one of the points for which Cumming and I, talking it over, could see no motive. Certainly he would wish that if anyone said to him you ought to have prevented Mr. Hartington buying those shares when you knew that he was in a precarious state of health, to be able to reply that when the shares were bought he had not the slightest idea of his being in anything but the best of health."

"At any rate I will see Dr. Edwardes, and ascertain exactly when he did tell Brander. He is certain to be able by turning back to his visiting book, to ascertain when he himself became aware of my father's danger, and is likely to remember whether he told Brander at once."

"But even without that, Mr. Hartington, if you can prove that

question of the date of the deed you have him completely on the hip. Still it will be a very difficult case to carry through, especially if you cannot get Cumming to come into court."

"But, as I began by telling you, I cannot carry out the case to a legitimate conclusion, nor do I want the intervention of lawyers in the matter. I want the estate back again if I can get it, but rather than this matter should be made public I would not lift a little finger to regain the property. It happens," and he smiled dryly, "that Mr. Brander's reputation is almost as dear to me as it is to him, for I am going to marry his daughter. We should not feel quite comfortable together, you see, at the thought that the father was working out a sentence of penal servitude."

"That is an unfortunate combination indeed, Mr. Hartington," Mr. Harford said seriously, though he could not repress a smile of amusement at the unexpected news. "Then it seems to me, sir, that Brander may in fact snap his fingers at any threat you may hold out, for he would feel certain that you would never take any steps that would make the matter public."

"Fortunately," Cuthbert replied. "Mr. Brander is wholly unaware of the little fact I have mentioned, and is likely to remain so until matters are finally arranged between us."

"That is indeed fortunate. Then I understand, Mr. Hartington, your object is to obtain so strong a proof of Brander's share in this affair as will place you in a position to go down to him, and force him into some satisfactory arrangement with you."

"That is it, and it is clear the first step will be to see the official liquidator and to obtain a sight of the mortgage."

"I suppose you know that he is the head of the firm of Cox, Tuke, and Atkinson, in Coleman Street. I suggest that the best plan will be to see him to-morrow, and to make an appointment with him for you to inspect the mortgage. You would wish me, of course, to be with you when you do so?"

"Think you very much. I will go round there in the morning, and will call at your office afterwards and let you know if I have arranged the matter, and the time at which I am to call to inspect the mortgage."

CHAPTER XIX.

CUTHBERT, on calling upon the head of the great firm of accountants, was courteously received by him.

"Of course, I remember your name, Mr. Hartington, with reference to the Abchester Bank failure. It seemed a particularly hard case, and I know our Mr. Wanklyn, who had charge of the winding up, took particular interest in it, and personally consulted me more than once about it, though I cannot exactly recall the circumstances now. What is it that you say you want to examine?"

"I want to have a look at the deed of mortgage that Mr. Brander, who purchased the property, had upon it."

"Yes, I remember now, that was one of the points on which Mr. Wanklyn consulted me. It struck him at first sight as being rather a remarkable transaction, and he went into it carefully, but it was all proved to be correct to his satisfaction. It is unfortunate that the system of registering mortgages is not enforced everywhere as it is in London—it would save a great deal of trouble in such cases as the present."

"Are the affairs of the bank quite wound up?"

"Dear me, no, Mr. Hartington. Why, it is but two years since the failure. There are properties to be realized that cannot be forced on the market without ruinous loss. There are assets which will not be available until after death; it is not the assets of the bank, but the assets of individual shareholders and debtors of the bank that have to be collected. I should say it will be at least twenty years before the last dividend will be divided. I am sure Mr. Wanklyn will be happy to let you see any document you desire. I will take you to him."

Mr. Wanklyn had a room on the same floor with his principal, and Mr. Cox took Cuthbert and introduced him to him.

"Mr. Hartington wants to have a look at the mortgage that Brander held on the late Mr. Hartington's estate. You remember we had several talks about it at the time, and you took a good deal of pains about the matter. Mr. Hartington wrote to me about it from Paris, if you recollect, and you replied to him in my name. I will leave him with you to talk it over."

"Have you any particular reason for wanting to see the deed, Mr. Hartington?" the accountant asked, when Mr. Cox had left the room. "I only ask because I suppose the documents connected with the winding up of the bank must weigh several tons, and it will take a considerable time for a clerk to hunt out the one in question. If you have really any motive for examining it I will get it looked out for you by to-morrow, but it will put us to a great deal of trouble."

"I am really anxious to see it for a special purpose, Mr. Wanklyn. I have reason to believe there was some irregularity in the matter."

"I am afraid it will make but little difference to you whether it was so or not, Mr. Hartington. The creditors of the bank have been the sufferers if there was any irregularity in it."

"Yes, I suppose so, and yet I assure you it is not a mere matter of sentiment with me. Other questions might turn upon it."

"Then I will certainly have it ready for you by to-morrow—give me until the afternoon. Will four o'clock suit you?"

"Very well. I will, with your permission, bring with me one of the attesting witnesses to my father's signature. He was one of Mr. Brander's clerks at the time."

Mr. Wanklyn looked up keenly.

"You can bring whom you like," he said, after a pause, "and I will put a room at your disposal, but of course the document cannot be taken away."

"Certainly not, Mr. Wanklyn, and I am very much obliged to you for granting my request."

Cuthbert called for James Harford at the hour at which he had said he went out to lunch, and told him of the appointment he had made.

"I have been thinking it over, Mr. Hartington, and I should recommend you to bring Cooper with you."

"Who is Cooper?"

"He is one of our greatest experts on handwriting. I don't know whether you have any of your father's letters in your possession."

"Yes, I have several. I brought over the last two I had from him, thinking they might be useful."

"Well, his opinion on the signatures may be valuable, though as a rule experts differ so absolutely that their evidence is always taken with considerable doubt, but it is part of his business to look out for erasures and alterations. It is quite possible Brander may have removed that blot, and that he has done it so well that neither you nor I could detect it; but whether he did it with a knife or chemicals you may be sure that Cooper will be able to spot it, whichever he used. I have very little doubt that your suspicions are correct and those parchments were really the pretended mortgage deeds. If you like I will go round and see Cooper at once and arrange for him to meet us in Coleman Street to-morrow at four o'clock."

"Thank you very much. The idea of the blot being erased had never struck me."

The next day Cuthbert met James Harford and Mr. Cooper at the door of the accountants, and after being introduced by the clerk to the expert they went up together. On giving his name in the office a clerk came across to him.

"If you will come with me, gentlemen, I will lead you to the room that is ready for you. This is the document that you desire to see."

As soon as they were alone they sat down at the table, and opened the deed.

"How is it for size?" Cuthbert asked.

"It is about the same size, but that is nothing. All deeds are on two or three sizes of parchment. The last page is the thing."

Cuthbert turned to it. There were but four lines of writing at the top of the page, and below these came the signatures.

"Of course I could not swear to it, Mr. Hartington, but it is precisely in accordance with my recollection. There were either three, four, or five lines at the top. Certainly not more than five, certainly not less than three. As you see there is no blot to my signature. Now, Mr. Cooper, will you be kind enough to compare the signatures of these two letters with the same name there?"

Mr. Cooper took the letter and deed to a desk by the window, examined them carefully, then took out a large magnifying glass from his pocket, and again examined them.

"I should say they are certainly not by the same hand," he said, decisively. "I do not call them even good imitations. They are nothing like as good as would be made by any expert in signing other people's names. The tail of the 'J' in James in these two letters runs up into the 'a,' but as you will notice the pen is taken off and the letter 'a' starts afresh. Here on the contrary you see the pen has not been taken off, but the upstroke of the 'J' runs on continuously into the 'a.' More naturally it would be just the other way. In these two letters the writer would be signing his name more hurriedly than to a formal deed, and would be much more likely to run his letters into each other than when making a formal signature on parchment.

"Looking through this glass you will observe also that although the letters run on together there is a slight thickening in the upstroke between each letter as if the writer had paused, though without taking his pen off, to examine the exact method of making the next letter in a copy lying before him. In the surname there are half a dozen points of difference. To begin with, the whole writing slopes less than in the other signatures. In both your father's letters the cross of the first 't' is much lower than usual and almost touches the top of the 'r' and 'i.' The same peculiarity is shown in the second 't' in both letters, while on the deed the 't's' are crossed a good deal higher. The whole word is more cramped, the flourish at the end of the 'n' is longer but less free. In the capital letter, the two downstrokes are a good deal closer together. There has been the

same pause between each letter as those I pointed out in the Christian name, and indeed the glass shows you the pen was altogether taken off the paper between the 'o' and the 'n,' as the writer studied that final flourish. My opinion is that it is not only a forgery but a clumsy one, and would be detected at once by anyone who had the original signatures before him. I will even go so far as to say that I doubt if any bank clerk well acquainted with Mr. Hartington's signature would pass it."

"And now for the blot," Cuthbert said. "There was a blot somewhere near the signature of Mr. Harford."

"Don't tell me where it was, Mr. Harford. I would rather not know its exact position."

With the aid of the magnifying glass the expert carefully examined the parchment and then held it up to the light.

"The blot was in the middle of the signature and involved the letters 'a' and 'r.' Is that right?"

"That is right, Mr. Cooper; he used blotting paper to it at once, and it did not show up very strongly."

"An eraser has been used and a chemical of some sort, and the two letters involved in the blot have been re-written, or at any rate touched up, but they have run a little. You can see it quite plainly through this lens. The difference between their outline and that of the other letters is quite distinct, and by holding the parchment so that the light falls across it, you can see that, although it has been rubbed, probably by the handle of a penknife to give it a gloss, the difference between that gloss and the rest of the surface, is distinctly visible."

"I see that," the clerk said, "and I should be quite prepared to swear now, Mr. Hartington, that this is the document I signed some three weeks after I signed as witness to the transfer."

"That is quite good enough, I think," Cuthbert said. "Thank you, Mr. Cooper, you have quite settled the doubt I had in my mind. I do not think I shall have occasion to ask you to go into court over this matter, but should I have to do so I will, of course, give you due notice."

After paying the expert's fee Cuthbert went into the office

and handed the document over to the clerk from whom he had received it.

"Would you kindly put it where it can be got at easily should it be wanted again. It is of the highest importance."

After parting with Mr. Cooper at the door, Cuthbert walked westward with Mr. Harford.

"So far you have proved that your suspicions are correct, sir, and I have not the least doubt that your father's signature to the transfer was, like this, a forgery. May I ask what step you propose to take next? Of course if your object was not to prevent publicity your course would be clear. You would first apply for a warrant for the arrest of Brander on a charge of double forgery. When that was proved, you would have to take steps to apply to have it declared that your father's name was wrongfully placed among the shareholders of the bank, and then endeavor to obtain a decree ordering the liquidator to reimburse the proceeds of the sale of the estate and all other moneys received by him from your father's executor. Lastly, you would apply to have the sale annulled, not only on the ground of fraud on the part of Mr. Brander, but because the liquidators could not give a title. Of course in all these steps you would have to be guided by a firm of high standing, but as you particularly wish to avoid publicity, I suppose your first step will be to confront Brander with the proofs of his guilt. I suppose you would wish me to go down with you. I shall be able to do so without difficulty, for I took no holiday last year and can, therefore, get two or three days whenever I choose to ask for them."

"Thank you, Mr. Harford. It will certainly be desirable that I should be backed up by your presence. The first thing I shall do will be to go down to Abchester to see Dr. Edwardes. I want to ascertain from him when he first knew of my father having heart-disease. That he did know it before his death I am aware, though, at my father's particular request, he abstained from informing me of the fact. He may also know when Brander first became acquainted with it. It will strengthen my case much if I am in a position to show that it was after he had

the knowledge that my father's death might take place at any moment, that he committed these frauds. As soon as I find this out, which will probably be in a few hours after my arrival there, I will send you a telegram. I am anxious to lose no time, because I do not want Brander to know of my arrival in Abchester until I confront him. If I could find out what he did with the £15,000 he proved to the liquidator that he had drawn out on the day this mortgage was said to have been executed, I should have the chain of evidence complete, but I don't see how that is to be got at."

"It might be got at by advertisements, Mr. Hartington; £15,000 is a large sum, and were you to advertise a reward of £100 for information as to whom Mr. Brander paid the sum of £15,000 on the date named in the mortgage, it is quite probable you might obtain the information."

"I might get it that way, but unless it is absolutely necessary I would rather not do so. Were I to advertise before I see him, he might have his attention drawn to it, and it would put him on his guard. I can but resort to it afterwards if he refuses to come to terms."

Accordingly, the next day Cuthbert went down to Abchester, travelling by a train that arrived there after dark, and taking a fly, drove to Dr. Edwardes'.

The servant took in his name and the doctor at once hurried out into the hall.

"Why, my dear Cuthbert, I am glad indeed to see you, though from your letter I had hardly hoped to do so for some little time. Come in, come in; my wife will be delighted to see you. Dinner is just on the table, so you have arrived at precisely the right moment."

"Dear me, Mr. Hartington, you are looking terribly ill," Mrs. Edwardes exclaimed, after the first greetings were over.

"I have been ill, but I am quite convalescent now. I did rather a foolish thing, Doctor. I joined a corps of Franc-tireurs raised in the schools and studios, and the Germans put a bullet through my body. It was a very near squeak of it, but fortunately I was taken to the American ambulance, which was far

the best in Paris, and they pulled me through. It is but ten days since I was discharged cured, but of course it will be some little time before I quite get up my strength again."

"Where was it, Cuthbert? Then you were fortunate indeed," he went on, as Cuthbert laid his finger on the spot; "the odds were twenty to one against you. Did they get the bullet out?"

"It went out by itself, Doctor. We were at close quarters in the village of Champigny when we made our sortie on the 1st of December, so the ball went right through, and almost by a miracle, as the surgeon said, without injuring anything vital. There is the dinner-bell, Doctor. I will go into your surgery and wash my hands. I remember the ways of the place, you see."

During dinner-time the talk was entirely of the siege. When the meal was over, the doctor and Cuthbert went to the former's study, where the doctor lighted a cigar and Cuthbert his pipe.

"How are they getting on at Fairclose?" Cuthbert asked, carelessly.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"I should say they heartily regret having changed their quarters. Of course it was her doing that they did so. She is a curious mixture of cleverness and silliness. Her weak point is her ambition to be in county society, and to drop the town altogether. She has always been hankering for that. No doubt it is partly for the sake of the girls—at least she always lays it to that. But when I used to attend them as babies, she was always complaining to me that the air of the town did not suit her. However, so far from gaining by the exchange, she has lost.

"As the leading solicitor here, and I may say the leading man in the place, Brander went a good deal into the county. Of course his wife did belong to a county family, and no doubt that helped open the doors of many good houses to him. Well, he is in the county now, but he is not of the county. There was naturally a lot of bad feeling about the smash of that bank. A good many men besides yourself were absolutely ruined, and as everyone banked there, there was scarce a gentleman in the

county or a tradesman in the town, who was not hit more or less severely. The idea was that Brander, whose name had been a tower of strength to the bank, had been grossly negligent in allowing its affairs to get into such a state. I think they were wrong, for I imagine from what I heard, that Brander was correct in saying that he was not in any way in the counsels of the directors, but confined himself to strictly legal business, such as investigating titles and drawing up mortgages, and that he was only present at the Board meetings when he was consulted on some legal questions.

"Still there is no stemming the tide of popular opinion. Abchester demanded a scapegoat. Cumming had disappeared, the five directors were ruined, and so they fell upon Brander. He could have got over that—indeed he has got over it as far as the town is concerned—but his purchase of Fairclose set the county against him. They considered that he got it for £20,000 below its value, which was true enough; the other estates that went into the market were all sold at an equal depreciation, but it was felt somehow that he at least ought not to have profited by the disaster, and altogether there was so strong a feeling against him that the county turned its back on Fairclose."

"By the way, Doctor, can you tell me when and how you first became aware of the state of my father? The loss was so recent that I asked but few questions about it when I was here, though you told me that you had known it for some little time."

"I can give you the exact date," the doctor said, stretching out his hand for a book on his desk. "Yes, here it is; it was the 23rd of March. His man rode down with the news that he had found him insensible. Of course I went up as hard as my horse could carry me. He had recovered consciousness when I got there, and his first request was that I should say nothing about his illness. When I examined him, I found that his heart was badly diseased, so badly that I told him frankly he had not many weeks to live, and that, as the slightest shock might prove fatal, I absolutely forbade him to ride. He said he hated to be made a fuss of. I urged him at least to let me write

to you, but he positively refused, saying that you would be greatly cut up about it, and that he would much rather go on as he was. The only exception he made was Brander. He was the only soul to whom I spoke of it. I called in and told him directly I got back here and he went that afternoon to Fairclose."

The date was conclusive to Cuthbert. The transfer had been ante-dated some three weeks; and the two clerks, therefore, attested it on the 24th or 25th of March; so Brander had lost no time in conceiving his plan and carrying it into execution.

"By the way, Doctor," he said, after a pause, "I shall be glad if you will not mention to anyone that I am here. I don't want people to be coming to see me, and I would especially rather not see Brander. I never did like the man from the time I was a boy, and I don't think I could stand either his business manner or his hearty one. I thought I would come down and have the pleasure of a chat with you again for a day or two, but I don't mean to stir out while I am here."

The next morning Cuthbert obtained a telegraph form from the doctor and sent his man with it to the post-office. It was directed to Harford, and contained only the words, "Come down this evening if possible. Put up at the George. Come round in the morning to Dr. Edwardes.'"

Cuthbert was really glad of the day's rest, and felt all the better for it. On the following morning Harford's name was brought in just as breakfast was over.

"It is the man who was Brander's clerk, Doctor," he said. "I met him in town and he has come down to see me on a little matter of business."

"Take him into the consulting-room, Cuthbert, I am not likely to have any patients come for the next half-hour."

"That settles it, sir," the clerk said, when he heard from Cuthbert of the date which he had obtained from the doctor, "though I cannot swear to a day."

"I hear that Brander comes to his office about eleven o'clock. He is sure to be there, for I hear that Jackson has gone away

for a few days. I will go at half-past. If you will call here for me at that time we will walk there together. I will go in by myself. I will get you to call two or three minutes after me, so that I can call you into his private room if necessary."

"You have soon done with him," the doctor said, as Cuthbert returned to the breakfast-room.

"I have given him some instructions and he will call again presently," Cuthbert replied. "By the way, we were talking of Brander; how have his two girls turned out? I mean the two younger ones; I met Mary in Paris during the siege."

"Ah. I heard from Brander that she was shut up there, and I was wondering whether you had run against her. He is very savage at what he calls her vagaries. Did she get through the starvation all right?"

"Oh, yes, she was living in a French family, and like most of the middle class they had laid in a fair stock of provisions when it became evident the place was to be besieged, and though the supply of meat was stinted I don't think there was any lack of other things."

"I liked Mary," the doctor said, warmly; "she was a straightforward, sensible girl, till she got that craze about woman's rights in her mind; in all other respects she was a very nice girl, and differed from the rest of them as much as chalk from cheese."

"And what are the sisters like?"

"They are like their mother, vain and affected, only without her cleverness. They feel bitterly their position at Fairclose, and make matters worse by their querulous complainings. I never go into the house unless I am sent for professionally, for their peevishness and bad temper are intolerable. If things had gone differently, and they had made good marriages, they might have turned out pleasant girls enough. As it is they are as utterly disagreeable as any young women I ever came across."

"Then Brander must have a very bad time of it."

"Yes, but from what I have seen when I have been there I don't thing they show off before him much. I fancy Brander's

temper has not improved of late. Of course, in public, he is the same as ever, but I think he lets himself loose at home, and I should say that the girls are thoroughly afraid of him. I have noticed anyhow that when he is at home when I call, they are on their best behavior, and there is not a word of any unpleasantness or discontent from their lips. However, I suppose the feeling against Brander will die out in time. I think it was unjust, though I don't say it was not quite natural, but when the soreness wears off a bit, people will begin to think they have been rather hard on Brander. There's the surgery bell, now I must leave you to your own devices."

At half-past eleven James Harford called, and Cuthbert at once went out with him, and they walked towards Mr. Brander's office, which was but a couple of hundred yards away.

"How do you do, Mr. Levison?" Cuthbert asked as he entered. "Is Mr. Brander alone?"

"Yes, he is alone, Mr. Hartington. I am glad to see you again, sir."

With a nod Cuthbert walked to the door of the inner office, opened it, and went in. Mr. Brander started, half rose from his chair with the exclamation—

"My dear——!" then he stopped.

There was something in the expression of Cuthbert's face that checked the words on his lips.

"We need not begin with any greetings, Mr. Brander," Cuthbert said, coldly. "I have come to tell you a story."

"This is a very extraordinary manner of address, Mr. Hartington," the lawyer said, in a blustering tone, though Cuthbert noticed his color had paled, and that there was a nervous twitching about the corners of his lips. Brander had felt there was danger, and the blow had come so suddenly that he had not had time to brace himself to meet it. Without paying any attention to the words, Cuthbert seated himself and repeated—

"I have come to tell you a story, Mr. Brander. There was once a man who was solicitor, agent, and friend of a certain land-owner. One day he had heard from his client's doctor that he had had an attack of heart-disease and that his life was

only worth a few weeks' purchase; also that the landowner desired that an absolute silence should be observed as to his illness. Then, like another unjust steward, the lawyer sat down to think how he could best turn an honest penny by the news. It was rather a tough job; it would involve forgery among other things, and there was a good deal of risk, but by playing a bold game it might be managed."

"What do you mean by this?" the lawyer exclaimed, furiously.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Brander. There is no occasion for you to fit the cap on to your own head yet. If you think there is anything in my story of a libellous nature you are at liberty to call your two clerks in to listen to it. Well, sir, the scheme this lawyer I am telling you about worked out did credit to his genius—it was complicated, bold, and novel. It happened he was solicitor to a bank. He knew the bank was hopelessly involved, that it could last but a few weeks longer, and that its failure would involve the whole of the shareholders in absolute ruin. If, therefore, he were to contrive to place his client's name on the register of shareholders that point would be achieved. Accordingly, having forms by him he filled one up, forging the name of his client. It would not have done to have had the date of the transfer later than the seizure of that gentleman, for manifestly no man, aware that he had but a few days or weeks to live, would have entered on a fresh investment. He, therefore, ante-dated the transfer by some three weeks.

"As to the witnesses to the forged signature there was no difficulty. He waited for a few days till his client called upon him, and then, after his departure, called in his two clerks, who witnessed the signature as a matter of course,—an irregular proceeding, doubtless, but not altogether uncommon. That matter concluded he went to the bank. It was above all things important that none of the directors should be cognizant of his client having been put on the register, as being friends of that gentleman they might have mentioned the matter to him when they met him. Having the manager a good deal under his thumb, from his knowledge of the state of affairs, he re-

quested him to pass the transfer with others at the next board-meeting, in such a way that it should be signed as a matter of routine without the names being noticed, suggesting that the manager should transfer some of the shares he held. This little business was satisfactorily performed and the name passed unnoticed on to the register. There was one thing further to be done in this direction, namely, that the bank should not fail before the death of his client, and he therefore requested the manager to let him know should there be any pressure imminent on the bank's resources, offering to get some of the mortgages it held transferred, and so to bolster up the bank for a considerable time. As a matter of fact he did raise £20-000 in this manner, and so kept the bank going until after his client's death, when he withdrew the offer, there being no longer any occasion to keep it on its legs. You follow this, I hope, Mr. Brander. It is interesting for ingenuity and boldness."

The lawyer made no reply. As Cuthbert spoke the ruddy color on his cheeks had been replaced by a ghastly pallor. An expression of bewilderment had come across his face, the perspiration stood out in big drops on his forehead.

"Thus far you see, Mr. Brander," Cuthbert went on, "the first part of the scheme had been ably carried out, but it still remained to reap the benefit of this ingenuity. In the first place it was certain that the estate of his client would, on the failure of the bank, come into the market. Under such circumstances, and seeing there would be widespread ruin in the county, the estate would fetch far under its value. It would be advisable to get it cheaper still, and this could be managed by the production of a mortgage upon it, and by the invention of a plausible tale to account for that mortgage having been kept a secret even from the dead man's son. As to the deed itself, the matter was easy enough; the document would only have to be drawn up by himself, or in some office in London, the signature of his client affixed as before and the two clerks be called in to witness it.

"It would be necessary to satisfy the official liquidator, however, who might make some inquiries concerning it. It

happened that some time before the lawyer had had occasion to pay over the sum of £15,000, as he would be able to prove by his bank-book. Therefore, £15,000 was the sum fixed upon for the mortgage, and the date of that document was made to coincide with that of the payment of that amount. It was easy enough to place among the dead man's papers receipts for the half-yearly payment of this interest. It was not necessary to show that his client had paid these sums by check, as they would, of course, have been deducted from the amount to be handed over by him as agent to his client.

"The scheme worked admirably. After the death of his client, the bank was allowed to break, the estate fell into the hands of the official receiver of the bank, the mortgage was presented, and the proofs considered satisfactory. The lawyer bought the estate for some £20,000 below its value, and this with the mortgage brought the purchase money down from £70,000 to half that sum. The story is interesting, and if anyone should doubt it I am in a position to prove it up to the hilt. I have the sworn statement of the bank manager as to the particulars of the interview with him, the injunction that the transfer should be passed unnoticed, the offer to support the bank, and the partial fulfilment of that offer. I have the opinion of an expert that the signature is not only a forgery but an exceedingly clumsy one. I have the statement of one of the clerks that the signature of both the transfer and the mortgage was witnessed by him and his fellow-clerk in obedience to the orders of the solicitor, but they did not see the signature affixed.

"Lastly, I have a singular piece of evidence that the mortgage was signed not on the date it purported but shortly after the seizure of the client. The clerk might have had some difficulty in swearing that this mortgage was the document that he signed, as the signatures were written on the last sheet of the parchment, and he saw nothing of the contents. But it happened that there were only four lines of writing on that page, and there are four on the mortgage in the hands of the official liquidator, but this is not the crucial point. The clerk, in

making his signature, dropped a blot of ink on the parchment. Now it was clear that this blot of ink might prove the means of identifying this document and of proving the time at which it was signed; therefore it was necesssary that it should be erased. This the lawyer proceeded to do and so cleverly that an unpracticed eye would not detect it. The expert, however, though not knowing where the blot had fallen, detected the erasure at once, and noticed that in erasing it two of the letters of the name had been involved, and these had been retouched so as to make them the same darkness as the rest. The chain of evidence is therefore complete."

The last blow had proved too crushing. There was a sudden rush of blood to his face, and, with a gasping sob, Mr. Brander fell back in his chair insensible. Cuthbert ran to the door and opened it.

"Mr. Levison, your employer is taken ill. Send the other clerk to fetch Dr. Edwardes at once, he will not have started on his rounds yet. Bring some water in here."

With the assistance of the clerk, Cuthbert loosened the lawyer's necktie and collar, swept the papers off the table, and laid him upon it, folding up his great coat and placing it under his head.

CHAPTER XX.

"APOPLEXY!" Dr. Edwardes exclaimed, as soon as he entered. "Cut his sleeve open, Cuthbert. Fetch a basin, sir, and some water," he added to the clerk.

He took a lancet from his pocket and opened a vein in the arm. At first only a few drops of dark-colored blood issued out.

"Dip a cloth in cold water and wrap it round his head; and do you, lad, run down to Miggleton, the confectioner, and get some ice, quick; it is a matter of life or death!"

At last the blood began to flow more freely.

"I think he will do now," the doctor said, "it is his first seizure. I have told him a good many times that he was too

fond of good living and did not take exercise enough. What brought this about, Cuthbert?"

"We had an unpleasant interview, Doctor. I had some ugly truths to tell him and did not spare him."

"Then I think you had better go before he comes to his senses again. Tell my man to bring down a mattress, pillows, and blankets. He won't be fit to be moved to-day, and we must make him up a bed here. Directly I see that he is out of immediate danger, I will send over to Fairclose to break the news to his wife. Yes, I will come round and let you know how he is going on as soon as I can leave him."

Cuthbert nodded and put on his hat and went out. James Harford was standing a few paces from the door.

"He has had a fit," Cuthbert said, as he joined him.

"I thought that was it when I saw the clerk run down the street without a hat and come back with the doctor two or three minutes later. Will he get over it?"

"The doctor thinks so, and I am sure I most sincerely hope he will do so—it would be a bad business in all ways if he did not. Now, Mr. Harford, I don't think there is any occasion to detain you here longer; it may be days before I can see him again, and I don't think it will be needful for you to confirm my statements. I fancy the fight is all out of him—it came upon him too suddenly—if he had known that I was here he might have braced himself up, but coming down like an avalanche upon him it stunned him. Now, Mr. Harford, you must permit me to draw a check for ten pounds for your expenses down here; when I come to my own again I shall be able properly to show my gratitude for the inestimable services you have rendered me."

"I will take the money for my expenses, Mr. Hartington, but I can assure you that I have no thought or wish for payment of any kind for my share in this business, and am only too glad to have been able to give some little aid towards righting the grievous harm you have suffered, to say nothing of paying off my old score against Brander."

Half an hour later Dr. Edwardes returned home.

"He is conscious now," he said to Cuthbert. "That is to say, vaguely conscious. I have not let him speak a word, but simply told him he had had a fit and must remain absolutely quiet. I don't suppose he has as yet any recollection whatever of what preceded it. I am going to write a note and send it up to Fairclose. I must keep a close watch over him for a bit, for I have taken a good deal of blood from him."

"I would rather you did not mention to anyone, Doctor, that I was present at the time he had the fit, as things may happen ere long that will set people talking, and if it was known that it was during an interview with me that he had this apoplectic stroke it might give rise to unpleasant surmises—unpleasant not only to him but to me, for—this is also a secret at present —I am going to marry his eldest daughter!"

"You don't say so, Cuthbert. Well, I congratulate you, for she is a charming girl. I need not say that you can rely upon my keeping it quiet until you choose to have it published."

"Well, Doctor, as it may be some days before I can see Brander again, I will go back to town this evening. I did not see anyone I knew as I went to his office, and I would rather that it should not be known that I am down here. As you are going back there now you might ask Levison to come round here to see me. I will then tell him that neither Brander nor myself would wish it mentioned that I was with him at the time he had that seizure."

"Then I suppose the fact is, Cuthbert, that while I have been flattering myself your visit was to me, you really came down to see Brander?"

"I am rather afraid, Doctor, that had some influence in bringing me down, but you must forgive me this time."

"All right, lad, I am glad to have had a glimpse of you again, whatever your motive was in coming down."

It was ten days before Cuthbert received a letter from the doctor saying that Mr. Brander was now strong enough to see him.

"He has asked to see you several times," he said, "but I have told him that I could not permit him to talk. However,

he is a good deal stronger now and is downstairs, again, and as I am sure some worry or other is preying on his mind and keeping him back, I told him this morning that I would send for you."

Cuthbert went down by the next train and was driven over in the doctor's gig to Fairclose. It was strange to him to enter the familiar house as a visitor, and he looked round the library into which he was shown upon giving his name, with a sort of doubt whether the last two years had not been a dream.

He had not much time for thought for the door opened and Mr. Brander entered. Cuthbert was shocked at his appearance. He looked a mere wreck of himself. He walked feebly and uncertainly. His face was pale and the flesh on the cheeks and chin was loose and flabby. He made his way to an arm-chair and sank wearily into it.

"What are you going to do with me, Cuthbert Hartington?" he asked in a weak voice. "Does all the world know that I am a forger and a swindler?"

"No one knows it, Mr. Brander, nor need anyone know it. If you make restitution as far as is in your power, the matter may rest entirely between us. With the evidence in my possession I am in a position to obtain a judge's order striking out my father's name from the list of shareholders of the bank and annulling the sale of Fairclose, of regaining my own, and of securing your punishment for the offences you have committed. The latter part, as I have said, I have no desire to press. I consider that you have been punished sufficiently already, but I must insist upon the restoration of the estates of which I have been wrongfully deprived."

"And you will say nothing of what I have done?"

"Nothing whatever; it will be for you to offer any reason you choose for resigning Fairclose to me, but there is one other point that I must insist on, namely, that you leave Abchester. Your illness will be a valid excuse for retiring altogether from an active share in the business and of relinquishing the part you have taken in the affairs of the town. As the senior partner you will doubtless receive a sufficient income from your business to enable you to live in comfort elsewhere, and it will be for your

own benefit as much as mine for you to leave the place, for it will be painful for both of us to meet."

"I cannot give up Fairclose altogether unburdened," the lawyer said. "£15,000 of the purchase money I found myself. The other £20,000 I raised on mortgages of the estate, and although that mortgage would be invalidated by the proof that I had no power to give it, the mortgagee would, of course, fight the question, and the whole matter would be made public."

Cuthbert was silent for a minute, not from any great doubt or hesitation, but he did not wish the man to see that he was eager to make terms, for he would at once think that he was not in the position to prove the statement he had made.

"It is a large sum," he said, "a very large sum to lose, and then there are two years' rents that you have received."

"These I could repay, Mr. Hartington," the lawyer said, eagerly. "I have six thousand pounds invested in securities I could realize at once."

Cuthbert was silent again.

"Mr. Brander," he said at last, "I feel, and I think naturally, very sore at the cruel wrong that has been inflicted upon me, but I cannot forget that in my boyhood I was always received with kindness by your wife, and for her sake, and that of your daughters, I am most anxious your reputation should remain untarnished. I am willing to believe that this crime was the result of a sudden impulse, and that in other respects you have been an honest man. I cannot forget, too, that my father had a great esteem for you. As to the two years' rents you have received, I will not claim them. I have done well enough without them, and in fact the necessity for working for my living has been of great advantage to me, and that alone makes me less inclined than I otherwise might be to press hardly upon you. I will, therefore, make this offer. You shall sign a paper that I have drawn up confessing the share you have taken in this business. That paper I pledge myself solemnly to keep a profound secret, unless by any subsequent actions you force me to use it in self-protection, and that you will sign a deed of gift to me of Fairclose and its estates, subject to the mortgage of

£20,000. You can hand me over the deeds of the estate and I will have the deed of gift drawn up. You will also give me your promise to leave this town and settle elsewhere. On these conditions, I pledge you my word that the transactions by which you obtained possession of the estates shall not be divulged, and that the high reputation you bear shall be altogether unsullied."

"God bless you, Mr. Hartington," the lawyer said, in a broken voice, "for your generosity in sparing my wife and children from the shame and disgrace that would have fallen upon them had you insisted on your rights. It is more than I deserve. I have never had a day's happiness since I came here; it seemed to me that all danger of detection had passed, and yet it was ever before me. I was ever dreading that in some way I had not provided against, it would come out."

"May I ask what income you will draw from your business?"

"The business is worth between four and five thousand a year, and by my deed of partnership I was to receive two-thirds of that as long as I myself chose to take a share in the management, and one-third when I like to retire altogether. A thousand a year is to be paid to my widow after my death, and two hundred apiece to my daughters at her death."

"So you will have some fifteen hundred a year, Mr. Brander, and with that and the six thousand you have invested you will not do badly. I shall return to town this evening again and will bring down the deed as soon as it is prepared."

"The papers connected with the estate are in a tin box at my office, Mr. Hartington," Mr. Brander said, in a voice more like his own than he had hitherto used. "I will write an order to Levison to hand it over to you. I feel a different man already," he went on, as he got up and took a seat at the table; "before, it seemed to me, there was nothing but disgrace and ruin staring me in the face. Now, I may hope that, thanks to your forbearance, I may enjoy in peace what remains to me of life. You may not believe me, Mr. Hartington, there is no reason why you should—but I swear to you I have been a miserable man ever since your father's death. It was not that I

was afraid of detection—it seemed to me in that respect I had nothing to fear—and yet I was miserable. Before, I was proud of the respect in which I was held in the town, and felt to some extent I deserved it, for I had given up well nigh every moment of my spare time to its service. Since then I have known that the poorest man in the town would draw aside from me did he but know what I was. To my family it has been a terrible disappointment that the county has turned its back on us. To me it has been a relief. I have felt a sort of satisfaction at finding that, in this respect at least, I had sinned in vain. Were it not for my wife and girls I would even now prefer that all should be known and that I should take the punishment that I deserve. I could bear prison-life better than to go about and mix with other men, knowing what I know of myself and feeling always what they would think of me did they know it also——" and he broke down and buried his face in his hands.

Cuthbert put his hand on his shoulder.

"You have done wrong, Mr. Brander, but as you have repented of it, you may fairly hope it will be forgiven you as freely and as fully as I forgive you. You may take it from me that I feel I have been greatly benefited by what has taken place, and that I have reason to bless the necessity that fell upon me for working for my living. I was spending a very useless and indolent life, and had nothing occurred to rouse me, should probably have led it to the end. Now I have worked hard for two years, and my masters tell me that I have every prospect of rising to eminence as an artist. There will be no occasion for me to rely upon that as a profession now, but the good the necessity for work has done me will remain, and at any rate I shall continue to work at it until this mortgage is paid off. It has in another way brought happiness into my life. Therefore, on my account at least, you need not regret what has happened. I should say nothing at present as to your intention of leaving here. Possibly we may hit upon some reason for your doing so that will be accepted as a natural one. I can assure you I am as anxious as you are yourself, indeed more so, that no shadow of suspicion of anything wrong should rest upon you.

So do not worry yourself about it. You can safely leave it in my hands. Now I will say good-bye. I hope that when I return I shall find you stronger and better. I do not know that there is any occasion for you to sign this paper I have brought."

"I would rather do so," the lawyer said, firmly. "It will be a relief to me to know that I have at least made a full confession."

He took the document Cuthbert had drawn up, read it through carefully, then took a pen and added at the bottom—

"The fifteen thousand pounds mentioned above as having been drawn by me from my bank for the purpose of the mortgage, was really used for the payment of calls on shares held by me in the Oakhurst Mining Company. This can be established by a reference to the accounts of that company in the hands of the liquidator."

He then signed his name and handed the paper to Cuthbert.

In spite of the efforts the latter made to hurry on Messrs. Barrington and Smiles, it was nearly three weeks before the deed of gift was prepared. It had, in the first place, been sketched out by Cuthbert, with the assistance of James Harford, and recited "That Mr. Brander, of Fairclose, handed back that estate, together with the house and all appurtenances appertaining thereto, to Cuthbert Hartington as a dowry with his daughter Mary upon her marriage with the said Cuthbert Hartington, being moved thereto partly by his love and affection for his daughter, partly by the desire to restore to the said Cuthbert Hartington the family estates of which he had been deprived, partly from the want of care of the said Jeremiah Brander in failing to represent to the late J. W. Hartington, father of the said Cuthbert Hartington, the grievous nature of the liability he would incur by taking shares in the Abchester and County Bank."

Cuthbert was the more anxious to get the affair arranged, as the insurrection in Paris had broken out, and he was eager to return there. At last the deed was drawn up and he returned to Abchester, and taking a fly at the station drove straight to Fairclose.

He had written several times to Mary lamenting that business had detained him longer than he expected, and suggesting that it would be better for her to leave Paris at once, but she had replied that she would rather remain there, at any rate, until his return. As he did not wish her to come to Abchester at present, he abstained from pressing the point, believing that McMahon would speedily collect a sufficient force at Versailles to suppress the insurrection

He found Mr. Brander looking much more himself. It was a very subdued likeness, but he had evidently gained strength greatly.

"I have been longing for your return," he said, as soon as Cuthbert entered the library. "I am eager to get out of this and to go away. Have you brought down the deed?"

"Here it is; it is all stamped and in due form, and needs only your signature and that of two witnesses."

Mr. Brander rang the bell.

"John, call Gardener in. I want you both to witness my signature." The coachman came in.

"Glad to see you again, Mr. Cuthbert," he said, touching an imaginary hat.

"I am glad to see you, Gardener. I knew you were still here."

All was ready for the signature. While waiting for the men's entry Cuthbert had said—

"I would rather you did not read this deed until you have signed it, Mr. Brander. I know it is a most unbusiness-like thing for you to do, but I think you may feel sure you can trust me."

"I have no intention of reading it," the lawyer said. "Whatever the conditions of that paper I am ready to comply with them."

After the signatures had been affixed, and the witnesses had retired, Cuthbert said—

"Now, Mr. Brander, you are at liberty to read the deed. I think you will find its provisions satisfactory."

Mr. Brander, with a slight shrug of his shoulders that signi-

fied that he was indifferent as to the details of the arrangement, took the paper and began to run his eyes carelessly through it. Suddenly his expression changed. He gave a start of surprise, read a few lines farther, and then exclaimed—

"Can this be true, are you really going to marry Mary?"

"It is quite true," Cuthbert said, quietly. "I first asked her a few weeks before my father's death when I met her down at Newquay. She refused me at that time, but we have both changed since then. I saw a great deal of her in Paris and she worked as a nurse in the American ambulance during the siege. I was one of her patients, having been shot through the body and brought in there insensible. Having assisted in saving my life she finally came to the conclusion that she could not do better than make that life a happy one. She had refused me because she considered, and rightly, that I was a useless member of society, and the fact that I was heir to Fairclose had no influence whatever with her, but finding that I had amended my ways and was leading an earnest and hard-working life, she accepted me, small though my income was."

"God bless her!" Mr. Brander said, fervently. "We never got on well together, Mr. Hartington. I had always an uneasy consciousness that she disapproved of me, and that she regarded me as a humbug, and as I was conscious of the fact myself this was not pleasant. So I was rather glad than otherwise that she should choose her own path. But I am indeed delighted at this. She is honesty and truth itself, and I pray she may make up to you for wrongs you have suffered at my hands."

"She will do much more than that, Mr. Brander, and you see I have good reason for what I said when I was here before, that the change in my fortune had been a benefit, since it had forced me to take up a profession and work at it. Had it not been for that I should never have won Mary. My being once again master of Fairclose would not have weighed with her in the slightest. She would not have married a mere idler, had he been a duke. Now you had better finish reading the deed."

The lawyer read it through to the end,

"You have indeed made it easy for me," he said, when he had laid it down.

"You see, I have an object in doing so, Mr. Brander. I told you that my interest in your reputation was as great as your own. I hope that in any case I should not have made a harsh use of the power I possessed. I am sure that I should not, especially as I felt how much I had benefited by the two years of work, but perhaps I might not have felt quite so anxious that no breath of suspicion should fall upon you had it not been for Mary."

"Does she know?" Mr. Brander asked.

"She does not know and will never hear it from me. She may have vague suspicions when she hears that you have made over Fairclose to me, but these will never be more than suspicions. Nor need your other daughters know. They may wonder, perhaps, that Mary should have so large a share of your property, but it will be easy for you to make some sort of explanation, as is given in this deed, of your reason for restoring Fairclose to me with her."

"They will be too glad to get away from here, to care much how it was brought about, and if afterwards they come to ask any questions about it, I can tell them so much of the truth that it had been found the sale of the property to me had been altogether illegal and irregular, and that in point of fact you had a right not only to the estate but to the £20,000 for which I mortgaged it to raise the purchase money, and to the two-years' rents.

"That is what I shall tell my wife. I think she has always had a vague suspicion that there was something shady about the transaction, and I shall tell her that, so far from regarding the loss of Fairclose as a hardship, I consider you have behaved with extreme generosity and kindness in the matter. Women do not understand business. I am sure it won't be necessary to go into details. She, too, will be heartily glad to leave Fairclose."

"Shall we go in and see them, Mr. Brander? You can tell them as much or as little of the news as you think fit, and after that you can give me some lunch. I want it badly."

"Thank you," Mr. Brander said, gratefully. "I did not like to ask you, but it will make matters easier."

He led the way into the drawing-room. Mrs. Brander was sitting at the window with an anxious look on her face. She knew of Cuthbert's former visit, and that he was again closeted with her husband, and had a strong feeling that something was wrong. The girls were sitting listlessly in easy-chairs, not even pretending to read the books that lay in their laps. They rose with a look of bright surprise on their faces as Cuthbert entered with their father.

"Why, Mr. Hartington, it is ages since we saw you."

"It is indeed—it is over two years."

"I have two surprising pieces of news to give you, Eliza. In the first place it has been discovered that there was a very serious flaw in the title to Fairclose, and that the sale to me was altogether illegal. Mr. Hartington has behaved most kindly and generously in the matter, but the result is he comes back to Fairclose and we move out."

The three ladies uttered an exclamation of pleasure. Fairclose had become hateful to them all, and at this moment it mattered little to them how it had come about that they were going to leave it.

"You don't mean to go back to the High Street, father?" Julia, the elder of the girls, asked anxiously.

"No, my dear; it will be a question to be settled between us where we will go, but I have decided to leave Abchester altogether. I feel that I require rest and quiet and shall give up business and go right out of it."

The girls both clapped their hands.

"And now for my second piece of news which will surprise you as much as the first. Your sister Mary is going to marry Mr. Hartington. The matter was settled in Paris, where they have both been shut up during the siege."

"That is, indeed, good news," Mrs. Brander said cordially, foreseeing at once the advantage of such a marriage.

The girls took their cue from her, and professed great pleasure at the news which, however, was not altogether welcome to them.

Mary, whom they had never liked, was to be mistress of Fairclose, and was to gain all the advantages that they had expected but had never obtained. The thought was not pleasant, but it was speedily forgotten in the excitement of the other news. Her mother, however, seeing the pleasure that her husband unmistakably felt at the thought of the marriage, was genuinely pleased. Not only might the connection be useful to the girls, but it might be invaluable in covering their retirement from Fairclose. There might be something more about that than her husband had said. At any rate this would silence all tongues and put an end to the vague anxiety that she had long felt. She had always liked Cuthbert, and had long ago cherished a faint hope that he might some day take to Mary.

"This all cames very suddenly upon us, Mr. Hartington. I suppose I ought to call you Cuthbert again, now."

"It would certainly sound more like old times, Mrs. Brander."

"Only think, my dear," the lawyer put in, "he proposed to Mary more than two years ago and she refused him. I suppose she never told you?"

"She never said a word on the subject," Mrs. Brander said, almost indignantly. "Why, it must have been before——" and she stopped.

"Before my short reign here as master, Mrs. Brander. Yes, I was down at Newquay sketching, when she was staying with her friend, Miss Treadwyn, and Mary was at the time too much occupied with the idea of raising womankind in the scale of humanity to think of taking up with a useless member of society like myself."

Mrs. Brander shook her head very gravely.

"It was a sad trouble to her father and myself," she said; "I hope she has got over those ideas."

"I think she has discovered that the world is too large for her to move," Cuthbert replied, with a smile. "At any rate she has undertaken the task of looking after me instead of reforming the world; it may be as difficult, perhaps, but it sounds less arduous."

At lunch the girls were engaged in an animated discussion as

to where they would like to move to, but Mrs. Brander put an end to it by saying—

"We shall have plenty of time to talk that over, girls—it must depend upon many things. Your father's health will, of course, be the first consideration. At any rate, I shall set my face against London. So you can put that altogether out of your minds. An income that would be sufficient to establish one in a good position near a country or seaside town would be nothing in London. And now, Cuthbert, we want to hear a great deal more about our dear Mary. She writes so seldom, and of course she has been cut off for so long a time from us that we scarcely know what she is doing. In Germany she did not seem to be doing anything particular, but as she said in her letters, was studying the people and their language."

"That is what she was doing in Paris—at least that is what she came to do, but the siege put a stop to her studies, and she devoted herself to the much more practical work of nursing the wounded."

"Dear me, what an extraordinary girl she is," Mrs. Brander said, much shocked. "Surely there were plenty of women in Paris to nurse the wounded without her mixing herself up in such unpleasant work, of which she could know absolutely nothing."

"She was a very good nurse, nevertheless," Cuthbert said, quietly. "She worked in the American ambulance, under an American doctor, the other nurses and assistants being all American or English."

"How do you know she was a good nurse, Mr. Hartington?" Clara asked.

"Simply because I was one of her patients, Miss Brander. I joined one of the corps of Franc-tireurs, in which most of my student-friends enrolled themselves, and had the bad luck to get shot through the body in the sortie at Champigny, and as your sister was one of the nurses in the tent where I lay, I think that I am a pretty fair judge as to her powers of nursing. She was often there during the heaviest time for twenty-four hours at a stretch, and completely knocked herself up by her

continued labors. At any rate I consider I owe my life in no small degree to her care."

"I don't think we ever understood Mary," Mr. Brander said, in a more peremptory tone than the girls had heard him use since his seizure. "There is no doubt that it was as much our fault as it was hers. I feel proud to hear that she has done such noble work. Mr. Hartington tells me," he said, abruptly changing the conversation, "that he has been working hard with the intention of making art his profession as it has long been his amusement. He seems to think that although he will, of course, be no longer obliged to look upon it as a necessary career, he intends at any rate to pursue it for a time."

"That will be very interesting," Mrs. Brander said, "and it is quite the fashion in our days."

"It is very nice when you haven't to live by it," Cuthbert said. "When you are obliged to do that, and instead of painting what you like, have to paint things that will sell, it is up-hill work, and none but men of real talent can push their way up out of the crowd. I shall be more happily situated, and shall therefore be able to devote an amount of care and time to a picture that would be impossible to a man who had his daily bread and cheese to earn by his brush. And now, Mr. Brander, we will have a few more words together and then I must be off. I shall most likely return to town this evening."

"It must be for you to decide, Mr. Brander," he went on, when they were alone in the study, "how this news shall be broken to the public. I am quite ready to be guided entirely by your wishes in the matter."

"The sooner the better. I would suggest that you should see Dr. Edwardes before you go up to town. If you will tell him what I told them in the next room, that it has been discovered that there is a flaw in the sale of Fairclose, and that as you are engaged to marry Mary, we have arrived at an amicable agreement under which you will return at once to Fairclose, while I intend to seek an entirely new scene and to retire altogether from business, there will be very little more needful. The news will spread like wildfire over the town and county.

After that I shall have very few questions asked me. None that I shall not be able to answer without difficulty. The state of my health will form an excuse for my cutting my farewells short. There will, no doubt, be some gossip and wonder as to how it has come about, but the county will be so pleased at your coming back again to your father's place, that they will not be very curious as to how it occurred. I shall go off as quickly and as quietly as I can, after calling to say good-bye to those with whom I have been so long associated in the municipal business.

"It matters not where we go. I can take a furnished house at some seaside watering-place. The doctor will advise which is most likely to suit me, and we can then look round and settle on our future plans at our leisure. If I gain strength I think it likely enough we may travel on the Continent for a time. The girls have never been abroad and the prospect would go a long way towards reconciling them entirely to the change."

"I think that a very good plan," Cuthbert said. "I was intending to call upon the doctor on my way down and he will at once set the ball rolling."

Mr. Brander went to the door where the fly had been waiting for two hours.

"God bless you!" he said. "I cannot tell you how deeply grateful I am to you for your forbearance and generosity."

"Don't worry any more about it, Mr. Brander," Cuthbert said, as he shook his hand, "it has been a temporary change, and good rather than bad has come of it. Believe me, I shall put the matter out of my mind altogether."

"Back again, Cuthbert," the doctor said, when he was shown into the consulting-room. "I was down just now at the station to see a man off, and the station-master said you had arrived by the 11-30 train, and that he had seen you drive off in a fly. I could hardly believe it, but as you are here in person I suppose that there can be no mistake about it. Of course you have been up to Brander's again?"

"I have, Doctor, and for the last time. That is, the next time I shall go up it will be to take possession of Fairclose."

"My dear lad, I am delighted," the doctor said, shaking him heartily by the hand, "how has this miracle come about?"

"I cannot give you all the details, Doctor. I will simply give you the facts, which, by the way, I shall be glad if you will retail to your patients for public consumption," and he then repeated the statement that he had arranged with Mr. Brander that he should make.

"And that is the tale you wish me to disseminate?" the doctor said, with a twinkle of his eye, when Cuthbert concluded.

"That is the statement, Doctor, and it has the merit of being, as far as it goes, true. What the nature of the illegality of this sale was, I am not at liberty to disclose, not even to you, but I have discovered that beyond all question it was irregular and invalid, and Brander and I have come to a perfectly amicable understanding. I may tell you that to prevent the trouble inseparable even from a friendly lawsuit he assigns the property to me as Mary's dowry, and as a sort of recognition of the fact that he acted without sufficient care in advising my father to take those shares in the bank. Thus all necessity for the reopening of bygone events will be obviated."

"A very sensible way, lad. You will understand, of course, that I know enough of Jeremiah to be quite sure that he would not relinquish a fine property if he had a leg to stand upon. However, that is no business of mine, and I have no doubt that the fact that he is going to be your father-in-law, has had no small influence in bringing about this very admirable arrangement. Of course the matter will make a good deal of talk, but these things soon die out, and the county will welcome you back too heartily to care how your return has been brought about. You can rely upon my action in the part of town-crier, and I am sure to some of my patients the flutter of excitement the news will occasion will do a great deal more good than any medicine I could give them. Of course you are going to stay here?"

"Only to dinner, Doctor. I shall run up to town again this evening."

CHAPTER XXI.

It was on the last day of March that Cuthbert Hartington reached Paris. During the six weeks that had elapsed since he had left it many events had taken place. He himself had gone away a comparatively poor man, and returned in the possession of the estates inherited from his father, unimpaired save by the mortgage given upon them by Mr. Brander. He had succeeded beyond his hopes; and having obtained unlooked-for proofs of the fraud that had been practised, had been able to obtain restitution—which was to him the most important point—and all had been done without the slightest publicity. In Paris, the danger he had foreseen had culminated in the Commune. The battalions of National Guards from Montmartre and Belleville had risen against the Provisional Government; the troops had fraternized with them and their generals had been murdered in cold blood.

The National Guards of the business quarters had for a time held aloof, but, in the absence of support from without and being enormously outnumbered, they were powerless, and the extreme party were now in absolute possession of the city. M. Thiers and the Assembly at Versailles had so far been unable to take any steps to reduce the revolted capital. Such troops as had been hastily collected could not be relied upon to act and it seemed probable that the National Guards and Paris would, in a short time, take the offensive and obtain possession of Versailles, in which case the flame of insurrection would spread at once to all the great towns of France, and the horrors of the Terror might be repeated.

The line of railway to Paris was still open, for upon the Communists preparing to cut off all communications, the Germans, still in great force near the town, pending the carrying out of the terms of the treaty of peace, threatened to enter Paris were

such a step taken. A vast emigration had taken place among the middle classes, and over fifty thousand persons had left Paris. So far the Communists had abstained from excesses, and from outrage upon peaceable citizens; had it been otherwise, Cuthbert would have returned to fetch Mary away at once. Her letters to him, however, had assured him that there was no cause whatever for uneasiness about her, and that everything was going on precisely as it had done, during the siege by the Germans. He had been anxious that she should, if possible, remain for the present in Paris, for he did not wish her to return to her family, and had made up his mind that if it became absolutely necessary for her to leave Paris she should arrange to go straight down to Newquay and stay there with her friends.

As he alighted from the carriage at the Northern Railway Station he found the place occupied by National Guards. There was no semblance of discipline among them; they smoked, lounged about, scowled at the few passengers who arrived, or slept upon the benches, wrapt in their blankets. There were none of the usual hotel omnibuses outside and but one or two fiacres; hailing one of these he was driven to his lodgings. He was greeted by the concierge with surprise and pleasure.

"So monsieur has come back. We did not expect you, though Monsieur Caillard, who comes here every day, told us that you would be sure to be back again in spite of the Reds. Ah, monsieur, what horror to think that after all Paris has gone through, these monsters should have become masters of the city! It would have been a thousand times better to have had the Prussians here, they would have kept order, and those wild beasts of Montmartre would not have dared even to have murmured. You have heard how they shot down peaceful citizens in the Rue de la Paix? Have you come to stay, monsieur?"

"For a time, anyhow;" and taking the key of his rooms Cuthbert carried up his pormanteau, and then at once came down and drove to Madame Michaud's.

Mary was half expecting him, for in his last letter to her he had told her he hoped to arrive in Paris that evening.

"I have been horribly anxious about you, Mary," he said, after the first greeting.

"There was no occasion for your being so," she replied, everything is pefectly quiet here, though from what they say there may be fighting any day, but if there is it will be outside the walls and will not affect us here."

"I don't think there will be much fighting," he said; "if the troops fraternize with the Communists there's an end of the business, all France will join them, and we shall have the Reign of Terror over again, though they will not venture upon any excesses here in Paris, for, fortunately, the Germans are still within gunshot, and they would have the hearty approval of all Europe in marching in here, and stamping the whole thing out. If the troops, on the other hand, prove faithful, I feel sure, from what I saw of the Belleville battalions, that there will be very little fighting outside the walls. They may defend Paris for a time, and perhaps bravely, for they will know they are fighting with ropes round their necks, and the veriest cur will fight when cornered. Your people here are not thinking of leaving, I hope?"

"No, and they could not now if they wanted; the Commune has put a stop to emigration, and though the trains still run once or twice a day, they go out as empty as they come in. Have you got through your business?" she asked, with a shade of anxiety.

"Yes, dear, and most satisfactorily; everything has been arranged in the happiest way. I unexpectedly obtained proofs that the sale of Fairclose was altogether irregular, and indeed, invalid. I have seen your father, who at once, upon my laying the proofs before him, recognized the position. Our arrangement has been a perfectly amicable one. He is going to retire altogether from business, and will probably take up his residence at some seaside place where there is a bracing climate. The doctor recommends Scarborough, for I may tell you that he has had a slight stroke of apoplexy, and is eager himself for rest and quiet. Fairclose and the estate comes back to me, nominally as your dowry, and with the exception that there is a

mortgage on it for £20,000, I shall be exactly in the same position that I was on the day my father died. I may say that your mother and the girls are delighted with the arrangement, for, somehow, they have not been received as cordially as they had expected in the county—owing of course to a foolish prejudice arising from your father's connection with the bank, whose failure hit everyone heavily—and they are, in consequence, very pleased indeed at the prospect of moving away altogether."

Mary's forehead was puckered up in little wrinkles of perplexity as she listened. "I am glad of course, very glad, that you have got Fairclose back," she said, "though it all seems very strange to me—is that all that I am to know, Cuthbert?"

"That is all it is necessary that you should know, Mary, and no one else will know any more. Your father's illness and the doctor's injunctions that he should retire from business altogether and settle in some place with a mild climate, is an ample reason for his leaving Fairclose, and your engagement to me, and my past connection with the place are equally valid reasons why I should be his successor there. I do not say, Mary, that there may not have been other causes which have operated to bring about this result, but into these there is no need, whatever, for us to enter. Be contented, dear, to know that all has turned out in the best possible way, that I have recovered Fairclose, that your family are all very pleased at the prospect of leaving it, and in that fact the matter ends happily for everyone."

"I lunched at the old place only yesterday," he went on lightly, "and the girls were in full discussion as to where they should go. Your father is picking up his strength fast, and with rest and quiet, will, I hope, soon be himself again. I expect, between ourselves, that he will be all the better for getting away from that work in the town, with its lunches and dinners. The Doctor told me that he had warned him that he was too fond of good living, specially as he took no exercise. Now that he will be free from the office, and from all that corporation business, he will no doubt walk a good deal more than he has done for many years and live more simply, and as the doctor told me yesterday, the chances are that he will have no recurrence

of his attack. I may tell you that from a conversation I had with him I learned that your father will still draw a very comfortable income from the business, and will have amply sufficient to live in very good style at Scarborough."

The fact that Cuthbert had lunched at Fairclose did more to soothe Mary's anxiety than anything else he had said. It seemed a proof that however this strange change had come about, an amicable feeling existed between Cuthbert and her father, and when he wound up with "Are you contented, dear?" she looked up at him with tears in her eyes.

"More than contented, Cuthbert. I have been worrying myself greatly while you have been away, and I never thought that it would end as happily as this. I know, dear, that you have concealed a great deal from me, but I am contented to know no more than that. I am as sure as if you had told me that you have brought all these things about in this friendly way for my sake. And now," she said after a pause, "what are your plans for yourself?"

"You mean for us, Mary. Well, dear, my plan is that we shall wait on here and see how things turn out. I don't want to go back to England till all these arrangements are carried out. I don't intend to have to go to Scarborough to marry you, and I think it will be vastly better for us to be married quietly here as soon as the chaplain at the embassy returns, which, of course, he will do directly these troubles are over. My present idea is, that I shall let the house at Fairclose, or shut it up if I cannot let it, and let the rents of the property go to paying off this mortgage, and I intend to take a modest little place near London, to live on our joint income, and to work hard until Fairclose is clear of this incumbrance."

"That is right, Cuthbert. I have been wondering ever since you told me you were to have Fairclose again, if you would give up painting, and hoping that you would still go on with it. I should so like you to win a name for yourself as a great painter."

Cuthbert laughed. "My dear child, you are jumping a great deal too fast at conclusions. I am not yet out from school. I

have painted my two first pictures, which you like, principally because your face is in one of them, but that is a short step towards becoming a great artist. You are like a young lady in love with a curate, and therefore convinced that some day he will be Archbishop of Canterbury, and with almost equally good foundation; however, I shall do my best, and as I shall still have a strong motive for work, and shall have you to spur me on I hope I may make a modest success."

"I am sure you will, and more than that," she said, warmly; "if not," she added, with a saucy laugh, "I think you might as well give it up altogether; a modest success means mediocrity, and that is hateful, and I am sure you yourself would be no more satisfied with it than I should."

"Well, I will go on for a bit and see. I agree with you, that a thing is not worth doing unless it is done well, but I won't come to any final decision for another year or two. Now it is past ten o'clock, and I must be going."

"When will you come? To-morrow?"

"I will come at three o'clock. Have your things on by that time, and we will go for a ramble."

René Caillard came into Cuthbert's room at nine o'clock the next morning.

"I came round yesterday evening, Cuthbert, and heard from the concierge that you had arrived and had gone out again. As she said you had driven off in a fiacre, it was evidently of no use waiting. I thought I would come down and catch you the first thing this morning. You look well and strong again, your native air evidently suits you."

"I feel quite well again, though not quite so strong. So things have turned out just as I anticipated, and the Reds are the masters of Paris."

René shrugged his shoulders. "It is disgusting," he said. "It does not trouble us much, we have nothing to lose but our heads, and as these scoundrels would gain nothing by cutting them off, I suppose we shall be allowed to go our own way."

"Is the studio open again?"

"Oh, yes, and we are all hard at work, that is to say, the few

that remain of us. Goudé has been fidgeting for you to come back. He has asked several times whether I have news of you, and if I was sure you had not left Paris forever. I know he will be delighted when I tell him that you have returned; still more so if you take the news yourself."

"I suppose Minette has resumed her duties as model?"

"Not she," René said scornfully, "she is one of the priestesses of the Commune. She rides about on horseback with a red flag and sash. Sometimes she goes at the head of a battalion, sometimes she rides about with the leaders. She is in earnest but she is in earnest theatrically, and that fool, Dampierre, is as bad as she is."

"What! Has he joined the Commune?"

"Joined, do you say? Why, he is one of its leaders. He plays the part of La Fayette, in the drama, harangues the National Guards, assures them of the sympathy of America, calls upon them to defend the freedom they have won by their lives and to crush back their oppressors, as his countrymen crushed their British tyrants. Of course it is all Minette's doing; he is as mad as she is. I can assure you that he is quite a popular hero among the Reds, and they would have appointed him a general if he had chosen to accept it, but he said that he considered himself as the representative of the great Republic across the sea, that he would accept no office, but would fight as a simple volunteer. He, too, goes about on horseback, with a red scarf, and when you see Minette you may be sure that he is not far off."

"Without absolutely considering Dampierre to be a fool, I have always regarded him as being, well, not mad, but different to other people. His alternate fits of idleness and hard work, his infatuation for Minette, his irritation at the most trifling jokes, and the moody state into which he often fell, all seem to show as the Scots say, 'a bee in his bonnet,' and I can quite fancy the excitement of the times, and his infatuation for that woman may have worked him up to a point much more nearly approaching madness than before. I am very sorry, René, for there was a good deal to like about him, he was a gentleman

and a chivalrous one. In Minette he saw not a clever model, but a peerless woman, and was carried away by enthusiasm, which is, I think, perfectly real ; she is in her true element now, and is, I should say, for once not acting. Well, it is a bad business. If the Commune triumphs, as I own that it seems likely enough, it will do, he will in time become disgusted with the adventurers and ambitious scoundrels by whom he is surrounded, and will, like the Girondists, be among the first victims of the wild beasts he has helped to bring into existence. If the troops prove faithful, the Commune will be crushed, and all those who have made themselves conspicuous are likely to have but a short shrift of it when martial law is established. Well, René as there is nothing that can be done in the matter, it is of no use troubling about it. None of the others have gone that way, I suppose."

" Of course not," René exclaimed indignantly. " You don't suppose that after the murder of the generals any decent Frenchman would join such a cause, even if he were favorable to its theories. Morbleu ! Although I hate tyrants I should be tempted to take up a rifle and go out and defend them were they menaced by such scum as this. It is not even as it was before ; then it was the middle class who made the Revolution, and there was at least much that was noble in their aims, but these creatures who creep out from their slums like a host of obnoxious beasts animated sorely by hatred for all around them, and by a lust for plunder and blood, they fill one with loathing and disgust. There is not among them, save Dampierre, a single man of birth and education, if only perhaps you except Rochefort. There are plenty of Marats, but certainly no Mirabeau.

" No, no, Cuthbert, we of the studio may be wild and thoughtless. We live gayly and do not trouble for the morrow, but we are not altogether fools ; and even were there nothing else to unite us against the Commune, the squalor and wretchedness, the ugliness and vice, the brutal coarseness, and the foul language of these ruffians would band us together as artists against them. Now, enough of Paris, what have you been doing in England, besides recovering your health ? "

"I have been recovering a fortune, too, René. A complicated question concerning some property that would, in the ordinary course of things, have come to me has now been decided in my favor."

"I congratulate you," René said, "but you will not give up art, I hope?"

"No, I intend to stick to that, Rene. You see I was not altogether dependent on it before, so that circumstances, are not much changed."

"You finished your pictures before you went away, did you not? The temptation to have a peep at them has been very strong, but I have resisted nobly—it was heroic, was it not?"

"It must have been. Yes, I put the finishing touches to them before I went away, and now I will show them to you René; it is the least I can do after all your kindness. Now go and look out of the window until I fix the easels in a good light, I want your first impressions to be favorable. There," after a pause, "the curtain is drawn up and the show has begun." He spoke lightly, but there was an undertone of anxiety in his voice. Hitherto no one but Mary had seen them, and her opinion upon the subject of art was of little value. He, himself, believed that the work was good, but yet felt that vague dissatisfaction and doubt whether it might not have been a good deal better, that most artists entertain as to their own work. In the school René's opinion was always sought for eagerly; there were others who painted better, but none whose feeling of art was more true or whose critical instinct keener.

René looked at the pictures for a minute or two in silence, then he turned to Cuthbert and took one of his hands in his own. "My dear friend," he said, "it is as I expected. I always said that you had genius, real genius, and it is true; I congratulate you, my dear friend. If it were not that I know you English object to be embraced, I should do so, but you are cold and do not like a show of feeling. These pictures will place you well in the second rank; in another year or two you will climb into the first. They will be hung on the line, that goes without saying. They are charming, they are admirable,

and to think that you are still at the school. I might paint all my life and I should never turn out two such canvases ; and it is a sin that one who can paint like that should expose himself to be shot at by Prussians. Now, do you sit down and let me look at them."

" Do so, René, and please remember that I want not praise, but honest criticism ; I know they have defects, but I want you to point them out to me, for while I feel that they might be improved, I have my own ideas so strongly in my head, that I cannot see where the faults are as you can. Remember, you can't be too severe, and if possible to do so, without entirely having to repaint them, I will try to carry out your suggestions."

René produced a pipe, filled and lighted it, then placed a chair so that he could sit across it and lean upon the back. He sat for upwards of a quarter of an hour puffing out clouds of tobacco-smoke without speaking.

" You mean what you say, Cuthbert ? " he said at last. " Very well, I will take the bright one first. As to the figure I have nothing to say ; the effect of the light falling on her head and face is charming ; the dress is perhaps a little stiff, it would have been bettered if relieved by some light lace or gauze, but we will let that pass ; it is a portrait and a good one. It is your pretty nurse at the Ambulance. Am I to congratulate you there too ? "

Cuthbert nodded.

" I thought so," Rêné went on, without moving his gaze from the pictures, " and will congratulate you presently. The background of the figure is the one weak point of the picture, that, too, like the portrait, I doubt not, was taken from reality, for with your artistic feeling you would never have placed that bare wall behind the figure. You have tried by the shadows from the vine above to soften it, and you have done all you could in that way, but nothing could really avail. You want a vine to cover that wall. It should be thrown into deep cool shadow, with a touch of sunlight here and there, streaming upon it, but less than you now have falling on the wall. As it is now, the cool gray of the dress is not sufficiently thrown up, it, like the wall,

is in shade except where the sun touches the head and face; but, with a dark cool green, somewhat undefined, and not too much broken up by the forms of the foliage, the figure would be thrown forward, although still remaining in the shade, and I am sure the picture would gain at once in strength and repose. Now, as to the other. It is almost painfully sombre, it wants relief. It expresses grief and hopelessness; that is good; but it also expresses despair, that is painful; one does not feel quite sure that the young woman is not about to throw herself into the sea. Now, if you were to make a gleam of watery sunshine break through a rift in the cloud, lighting up a small patch of foam and breaker, it would be a relief; if you could arrange it so that the head should stand up against it, it would add greatly to the effect. What do you think?" he asked, breaking off suddenly and turning to Cuthbert.

"You are right in both instances, René. Both the backgrounds are from sketches I made at the time; the veranda in the one case, and the sea and sky and rock in the other are as I saw them, and it did not occur to me to change them. Yes, you are a thousand times right. I see now why I was discontented with them, and the changes you suggest will be invaluable. Of course, in the sea-scene the light will be ill-defined, it will make its way through a thin layer of cloud, and will contrast just as strongly with the bright warm sunshine on the other picture, as does the unbroken darkness. There is nothing else that you can suggest, René?"

"No, and I almost wish that I had not made those suggestions, the pictures are so good that I am frightened, lest you should spoil them by a single touch of the brush."

"I have no fear of that, René, I am sure of the dark picture, and I hope I can manage the other, but if I fail I can but paint the wall in again. I will begin at once. I suppose you are going round to Goudé's; tell him that I am back, and will come round this evening after dinner. Ask all the others to come here to supper at ten; thank goodness we shall have a decent feed this time."

Directly René had left, Cuthbert set to work with ardor.

He felt that Rêné had hit upon the weak spots that he had felt and yet failed to recognize. In four hours the sea-scape was finished, and as he stepped back into the window to look at it, he felt that the ray of misty light showing rather on the water than on the air, had effected wonders, and added immensely to the poetry of the picture.

"I have only just time to change, and get there in time," he said, with a very unlover-like tone of regret, as he hastily threw off his painting blouse, ate a piece of bread left over from breakfast, and drank a glass of wine. He glanced many times at the picture.

"Curious," he muttered, "how blind men are to their own work. I can detect a weak point in another man's work in a moment, and yet, though I felt that something was wrong, I could not see what it was in my own. If I succeed as well with the other as I have done with this I shall be satisfied indeed."

"You are a quarter of an hour late, sir," Mary said, holding up her finger in reproof as he entered. "The idea of keeping me waiting, the very first time after our engagement. I tremble when I look forward to the future."

"I have been painting, Mary, and when one is painting one forgets how time flies; but I feel greatly ashamed of myself, and am deeply contrite."

"You don't look contrite at all, Cuthbert. Not one bit."

"Well, I will not press for forgiveness now, I think when you see what I have been doing you will overlook the offence."

"What have you been doing? I thought you told me that you had quite finished the two pictures, the day you came to say good-bye before you started for Brussels."

"René has been criticising them and has shown me where I committed two egregious blunders."

"Then I think it was very impertinent of him," Mary said in a tone of vexation. "I am sure nothing could have been nicer than they were even when I saw them, I am certain there were no blunders in them, and I don't see how they could be improved."

"Wait until you see them again, Mary. I altered one this morning, but the other will take me three or four days steady work. I am not so sure of success there, but if you don't like it when you see it, I promise you that I will restore it to its former condition, now let us be off; if I am not mistaken there is something going on, I saw several battalions of National Guards marching through the streets; and there is a report that 50,000 men are to march against Versailles. We may as well see them start, it may turn out to be an historic event."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE march against Versailles did not take place on the first of April, although the Communists had every reason to believe that they would meet with no opposition, as on the previous night two regiments of the army, forming the advanced guard between Versailles and Paris, came in, together with a battery of artillery, and declared for the Commune. The next morning Cuthbert went up at nine o'clock, as he had arranged to take Mary out early, and to work in the afternoon. Just as he reached the house he heard a cannon-shot.

"Hurry on your things," he said as he met her, "a gun has just fired; it is the first in the Civil War; perhaps the National Guard are starting against Versailles; at any rate it will be worth seeing."

The girl was ready in two or three minutes, and they walked briskly to the Arc de Triomphe. As they did so they could hear not only the boom of cannon, but the distant firing of musketry. Around the Arch a number of people were gathered, looking down the long broad avenue running from it through the Porte Maillot, and then over the Bridge of Neuilly to the column of Courbeil. Heavy firing was going on near the bridge, upon the banks of the river, and away beyond it to the right.

"That firing means that France is saved from the horrors of another red Revolution, Mary," Cuthbert said. "It shows that some of the troops at least are loyal, and in these matters ex-

ample is everything. There was a report that Charrette's Zouaves and the gendarmes have been placed at the outposts, and if the report is true, it was a wise step, indeed, for McMahon to take, for both could be relied upon; and now fighting has begun, there is hope that the troops behind will stand firm."

"Why should they, Cuthbert?"

"Some of the shots from this side are sure to fall among them, and if a few are killed and wounded the rest will get angry, and all idea of fraternizing with the men who are firing on them will be at an end. I should like to see how that crowd of National Guards are behaving."

"Shall we go down and look, Cuthbert. See, there is an omnibus going down the hill, so I don't suppose there can be much danger."

"I don't think that there is any danger at present, Mary; the balls will hardly come so far, but if the troops open fire with cannon, they will send shell right up this avenue."

"Would you go by yourself if I were not here, Cuthbert?"

"Well, I certainly should, but that is no reason why I should go with you."

"I can see women looking out of the windows," she said, "so we will go down together, Cuthbert. We had the German shell falling near us while the siege was going on, and things went on just as usual."

"Come on then, dear; at any rate it will be only field-guns and not heavy siege artillery, and I dare say we can get into one of the houses and look out from them; a twelve-pounder would scarcely do much harm to one of these solid stone buildings."

They went quietly down the road. No whiz of bullet or crash of shell was heard, and without interruption they continued their course until they arrived near the gate. Near it were two battalions of the National Guard, who were in a state of utter disorder. Some of the men were quietly walking away with their rifles slung behind them, in spite of a line of sentries placed across the road and the efforts of their officers. Cuthbert questioned some of the men, as they came along, as to what had

happened, but the most contradictory answers were given. They had been fired upon from Fort Valerien; they had been attacked from Courbevoie; they had been betrayed; they had been sent out without any cannon: ammunition was short; they were not going to stay to be shot down; they were going to the Hôtel de Ville to turn out the traitors who had sent them out without a proper supply of ammunition. That they had some ammunition was evident from the fact that several muskets went off accidentally, the result of nervousness on the part of those that held them.

"We won't stay here to risk being shot by these cowardly fools," Cuthbert said, "let us get into one of the houses."

They went back a short distance, and Cuthbert spoke to a man standing at his door. "This lady and myself are English," he said, "would you allow us to go up and stand at one of the windows to see what is going on?"

The request was at once acceded to, and they were soon posted at a window on the fifth floor.

"Look at them," Cuthbert said in disgust, "these are the heroes who clamored to go out and destroy the Germans."

The scene below was certainly singular—the bugles and drums sounded the assembly and beat the rappel alternately, but the men paid not the slightest attention to the call, but continued to slink away until the drummers and buglers remained alone. Of the two battalions, some fifty men posted at the loop-holes of the crenelated wall by the gate remained; the rest had melted away. From the balcony at the window a fine view was obtained across the country. A heavy musket-fire was still maintained along the river-side, and there was a continuous roll of musketry at Courbevoie, where, as one of the National Guard had told them, a battalion which occupied the barracks there had been cut off by the advance of the troops. Artillery and musketry were both at work there, but elsewhere there was no artillery fire.

Close to the bridge at Neuilly the struggle was maintained for a time, and presently a column of troops were seen advancing against the bridge. As it did so the firing there ceased at once,

and it was soon evident that the troops had gained the position. Numbers of National Guards soon came trooping in at the gate. A very few remained there; the rest, without waiting for orders, hurried on into Paris. A dark group now appeared on the road leading up to Courbeil; there was a white puff of smoke and a shell exploded a hundred yards on the other side of the gate. A steady fire was now kept up by two guns, the greater part of the shells exploded beyond the outer works; but several came up the avenue, two of them striking houses, and others exploding in the roadway. Each time when the whistle of a shell was heard approaching, Cuthbert drew Mary back from the balcony into the room.

"I fancy," he said, "the troops have an idea that there are masses of the Communists assembled near the gates in readiness for a sortie, and they are firing to prevent their coming out, until they have fortified the bridge and the other points they have occupied."

The firing continued for some time. At other windows the inhabitants were watching the conflict, and Cuthbert pointed out, to Mary's great amusement, the precautions that some of them were taking to ensure their personal safety. One woman had drawn down the Venetian blinds, and was looking between them, another was peering out with a pillow held over her head. The few National Guards who remained at their post were men of courage, for they showed no signs of flinching even when shells exploded within a fewyards of the position they occupied. Presently there was a sound of wheels, and two four-pounder guns were brought up and placed one on each side of the gate to sweep the approaches.

Between one and two o'clock several battalions of National Guards came leisurely up, piled their arms and sat down under shelter of the wall. It was evident they had no idea of making a sortie, but had been brought up to defend the gate in case it was attacked. Soon after their arrival, a party that had remained near the river returned and it was clear that at least a portion of the troops had proved faithless, for with them were forty or fifty soldiers, who had come over during the fight.

They were disarmed and then escorted into the town, where, as Cuthbert afterwards learned, they were received with enthusiasm by the mob.

"It is evident that there is no idea of any attempt being made to recapture the bridge at present, Mary; I don't know how you feel but I am getting desperately hungry, so I think we may as well be going back. I should like to see what is going on in the city. Will you come with me? I have no doubt we shall be able to get a voiture up at the arch, and we can have lunch there."

Mary was as anxious to see what is going on as he was, and in a quarter of an hour they alighted in the Rue Rivoli. As yet the population had heard but vague reports that fighting was going on, and matters were comparatively quiet, for so many rumors had pervaded the town during the last few days, that they were not generally believed. Accordingly, after lunch, Cuthbert took Mary home in a fiacre.

"I have been quite alarmed about you, my dear, where have you been?" Madame Michaud said as they entered.

"We have been seeing the fighting, madame, and the Reds have been beaten."

"I have heard all sorts of stories about it, but most of them say that the Versailles people got the worst of it."

"Then the stories were not true," Mary said, "most of the National Guard wouldn't fight at all, and the regiments all broke away and went into Paris without firing a shot, the troops have taken the bridge of Neuilly."

"The good God be thanked," Madame Michaud said piously, "my husband was afraid the troops would not fight, and that we were going to have terrible times; but there is a hope now, that the Commune will be put down."

"Every hope, madame," Cuthbert said. "I was sure this scum of Paris would not fight if the troops would do so. They have too much regard for their worthless skins. It may be some time before McMahon can get a force together sufficient to take Paris, but sooner or later he will do so, though it will be a serious business with the forts all in the hands of the

Communists. If they had but handed over one or two of the forts to the gendarmes, or kept a company or two of sailors there, there would have been a line by which the troops could have approached the town, as it is they will have to bring up siege-guns and silence Issy and Vanves before much can be done."

An hour later Monsieur Michaud arrived; he too had been in the city and was in ignorance of what had taken place during the morning.

"That accounts for it," he said, "we are all ordered to be under arms at eight o'clock this evening."

"But you will not go?" his wife exclaimed anxiously.

"But I must go, my dear. I have no desire to be shot, and I think there is much more fear of my being shot, if I don't answer to the call of my name than there will be if I do. In the first place, we may not go out beyond the wall, in the second place, if there is I may see a chance of running away, for mind you, though I hope I should have fought as bravely as others if the Germans had come, I do not feel myself called upon to fight against Frenchmen and in a cause I hate."

"You will find yourself in good company anyhow, Monsieur Michaud," Cuthbert laughed. "We have seen nineteen hundred and fifty men out of two thousand march off without firing a shot to-day."

"So much the better, monsieur, four out of five of the National Guards hate it all as much as I do. Will you dine with us to-day, monsieur, and then we can go down together afterwards."

Cuthbert accepted the invitation willingly. "Yes, you can come down with us, Mary," he went on, in answer to a look of appeal from her. "I will bring her back safely, Madame Michaud, the sight will be well worth seeing. Before I go I will have a look round and see if I can get a bed for the night, it is a long way out from my lodgings and I should like to be out here by daylight, for if they mean to march on Versailles they are sure to start as soon as it is light."

"We have a spare room," Madame Michaud said, "and it is

quite at your disposal. It will be doing us a kindness if you will accept it, for when my husband is away I always feel nervous without a man in the house, and as it is but ten minutes' walk from here to the Arc de Triomphe, you will be on the spot, and indeed from the roof of this house you can obtain a view all over the country."

A great change had taken place in the appearance of Paris when they went down in the evening, the town was in a state of the wildest excitement, everywhere drums were beating and trumpets sounding, everywhere National Guards mustering. The streets were crowded, the most violent language uttered by the lower classes, and threats of all kinds poured out against the 'butchers of Versailles.' On the walls were red placards issued by the Commune and headed "Men of Paris. The butchers of Versailles are slaughtering your brethren ! ! !"

"As a rule the brethren decline to be slaughtered, Mary," Cuthbert said as they read the proclamation. "You see, if the troops fire they are butchers, if the National Guards fire they are heroes. Considering that Paris has ten armed men to every one McMahon has got, even if all the troops could be relied upon, the Parisians must indeed be of a mild temper if they submit to be butchered."

Monsieur Michaud now left them to take his place in the ranks of his battalion. It was not long before the National Guards were in motion, and for hours columns of troops moved up the Champs Elysées. The Rue Rivoli was actually choked with the men; the mob shouted "Vive la Commune" until they were hoarse, and the battalions from the working quarters lustily sang the chorus of the Marseillaise.

At ten o'clock Cuthbert and Mary arrived at the Arc de Triomphe on their way back. Along the whole line from the Tuileries the National Guard were bivouacked. The arms were piled down the centre of the road, and many of the men had already wrapped themselves in their blankets and lain down to sleep with their heads on their knapsacks. The wine-shops in the neighborhood were all crowded, and it was evident that many of the men had determined to keep it up all night.

Madame Michaud had coffee ready for them on their return, and after drinking it they went to their rooms, Mary being completely tired out with the fatigue and excitement of the day. At five o'clock Cuthbert was up; he had told Mary the night before that he would return for her at eight. On arriving at the Arc de Triomphe he found the National Guards pouring down the avenue to the Fort Maillot. Three heavy columns were marching along the roads which converged at the Bridge of Neuilly. Here Cuthbert expected a desperate struggle, but a few shots only were fired, and then a small body of troops covered by a party of skirmishers, retired up the hill, and then turning off made their way towards Fort Valerien.

The force was evidently insufficient to hold the bridge against the masses of revolutionists advancing against it, and the real resistance to the forces of the Commune would commence further back. Crossing the bridge the National Guard spread out to the right and left and mounted the hill, as they did so some eighteen-pounder guns which had been the day before mounted on the Fort, opened fire on the bridge, and for a time the forward movement ceased, and the regiment on their way down towards the gate were halted. Cuthbert chatted for some time with one of the officers and learnt from him that this was not the real point of attack,

"It is from the other side of the river that the great stroke against the Versaillaise will be struck," he said, "a hundred and fifty thousand National Guards advanced on that side; they will cross the heights of Meudon, and move straight to Versailles. We have but some twenty-five thousand here, and shall advance as soon as the others have attacked Meudon."

In an hour the forward movement had again commenced, a heavy column poured across the bridge, the firing from Valerien having now ceased. Cuthbert watched the black mass advancing up the slope towards Courbeil. It was not until they reached the top of the slope that Valerien suddenly opened fire. Puff after puff of white smoke darted out from its crest in quick succession, the shells bursting in and around the heavy column. In a moment its character changed; it had been literally cut

in half by the iron shower. Those in front of the point where the storm had struck it, broke off and fled to the village of Nanterre on the left, where they took shelter among the houses. The other portion of the column broke up as suddenly, and became at once a disorganized mob, who at the top of their speed rushed down to the slope again to the bridge at Neuilly. Across this they poured in wild confusion and made no halt until they had passed the Fort Maillot. There the officers attempted to rally them, but in vain ; many had thrown their muskets away in their flight, the rest slung them behind them, and continued their way to Paris, all vowing that they had been betrayed, and that they would have vengeance on the Commune. Seeing that there was no more probability of fighting on his side, Cuthbert returned to Madame Michaud's.

"Madame is on the roof," Margot said as he entered; "everyone is up there: she said I was to give you breakfast when you came in; the coffee is ready, and I have an omelette prepared, it will be cooked in three minutes ; Madame said that you would be sure to be hungry after being out so long." In a quarter of an hour he ascended to the roof. The resident on the ground-floor had an astronomical telescope with which he was in the habit of reconnoitring the skies from the garden. This he had taken up to the roof, where some twenty persons were gathered. A magnificent view was obtained here of the circle of hills from Valerien round by Meudon, and the whole of the left bank of the river. It needed but a glance to see that the army of the Commune had made but little progress. Although the fighting began soon after two o'clock in the morning, and it was now nearly mid-day, the heights of Meudon were still in the hands of the troops.

From among the trees by the chateau white puffs of smoke shot out, many of the shells bursting in and around the fort of Issy, which replied briskly. The guns of Vanves joined in the combat, their fire being directed towards the plateau of Chatillon, which was held by the troops. Round Issy a force of the National Guard was assembled, but the main body was in the deep valley between the forts and Meudon, and on the slopes

nearly up to the chateau; the rattle of musketry here was continuous, a light smoke drifting up through the trees. After a time it was evident that the line of musketry fire was lower down the hill, descending, showing that the troops were pressing the Communists backwards, and presently one of the batteries near the chateau shifted its position, and took ground some distance down the hill, and this and a battery near the end of the viaduct by the chateau, opened a heavy fire on the forts.

A look through the telescope showed that the Communists were crouching behind walls and houses, occasionally, when the fire of the guns was silent, a few of them would get up and advance into the open, but only to scamper back into shelter as soon as they reopened fire.

"That settles it, monsieur," Cuthbert said, to the owner of the telescope, after taking a long look through it, "hitherto, the Communists have believed that Versailles was at their mercy, and they had but to march out to capture it. They have failed, and failure means their final defeat. They say that the prisoners of war are arriving in Versailles at the rate of two or three thousand a day, and in another fortnight, Thiers will have a force sufficient to take the offensive, and by that time, will doubtless have siege-guns in position. I don't say that Paris may not hold out for a considerable time, but it must fall in the long run, and I fear, that all who have got anything to lose will have a very bad time of it."

"I fear so, monsieur; as these wretches become more desperate, they will proceed to greater lengths. You see they have already insisted that all the National Guard—whatever their opinions—shall join in the defence of the city. They have declared the confiscation of the goods of any member of the Guard who shall leave the town. I hear a decree is likely to be published to-morrow or next day confiscating all Church property; already they have taken possession of the churches, and turned them into clubs. If they do such things now, there is no saying to what lengths they may go as they see their chances of success diminishing daily."

Although the artillery fire was maintained for some time longer, it was by three o'clock evident that the battle was virtually over. The party therefore descended from the roof, and Cuthbert strolled back to the centre of Paris. The streets, that evening, presented a very strong contrast to the scene of excitement that had reigned twenty-four hours before. There was no shouting and singing; no marching of great bodies of troops. An air of gloom pervaded the lower classes, while the bourgeois remained for the most part in their houses, afraid that the deep satisfaction the events of the day had caused them, might betray itself in their faces.

For the next few days Cuthbert worked steadily, going up late in the afternoon to Passy. The Commune had, on the day after the failure against Versailles, issued a decree that all unmarried men from seventeen to thirty-five, should join the ranks, and a house-to-house visitation was ordered to see that none escaped the operation of the decree. One of these parties visited Cuthbert: it consisted of a man with a red sash, and two others in the uniform of the National Guard. As soon as they were satisfied of Cuthbert's nationality, they left, having been much more civil than he had expected. He thought it advisable, however, to go at once to the Hôtel de Ville, where, on producing his passport, he was furnished with a document bearing the seal of the Commune, certifying that being a British subject, Cuthbert Hartington was exempt from service, and was allowed to pass anywhere without molestation.

Equal good luck did not attend the other students, all of whom were, to their intense indignation, enrolled upon the list of the National Guard of their quarter. Cuthbert had difficulty in retaining a perfectly serious countenance, as René, Pierre, and two or three others came in to tell him what had occurred.

"And there is no getting away from it," René said. "If we had thought that it would come to this, of course we would have left Paris directly this affair began, but now it is impossible: no tickets are issued by the railways except to old men, women and children, no one is allowed to pass through the gates without a permit from the Commune, and even if one could manage

to get on to the wall and drop down by a rope one might be taken and shot by the Communist troops outside, or, if one got through them, by the sentries of the army of Versailles. What would you advise us to do, Cuthbert?"

"I am afraid I can't give you any advice whatever, René, it is certainly horribly unpleasant being obliged to fight in a cause you detest, but I don't think there will be a very great deal of fighting till an assault is made on the city, and when that begins, I should say the Communists will be too busy to look for absentees from the ranks."

"We shall be in double danger then," Pierre Leroux put in. "We run the risk of being shot by the Communists for not fighting at the barricades, and if we escape that, we have a chance of being shot by the Versaillais as Communists. It is a horrible position to be placed in."

"Well, I should say, Pierre, keep your eyes open and escape if you possibly can before the assault takes place. I should think some might manage to get out as women, but, of course you would have to sacrifice your mustaches. But if you did that, and borrowed the papers of some young woman or other, you might manage it. No doubt it would be awkward if you were found out, but it might be worth trying. If I cannot leave before the assault takes place I mean to go to one of the English hotels here, Meurice's or the Dover, and establish myself there. During such fighting as there may be in the streets, there will be very few questions asked, and one might be shot before one could explain one was a foreigner, but the hotels are not likely to be disturbed. Seriously I should say that the best thing you can all do when the fighting begins in the streets, is to keep out of the way until your battalion is engaged, then burn anything in the way of uniform, get rid of your rifle somehow, and gather at Goudé's. He could vouch for you all as being his pupils, and as being wholly opposed to the Commune. His name should be sufficiently well known, if not to the first officer who may arrive, at least, to many officers, for his testimony to be accepted. Still, I do think that the best plan of all will be to get out of the place when you get a chance."

Some of the students did succeed in getting out. Pierre and two others made their way down through the drains, came out on the river at night, and swam across. One of the youngest went out by train dressed as a woman, but the rest were forced to don the uniform and take their places in the ranks of the National Guard. The question of leaving Paris was frequently discussed by Cuthbert and Mary Brander, but they finally determined to stay. It was morally certain that the troops would enter Paris either at the Port Maillot or at the gate of Pont du Jour; or at any rate, somewhere on that side of Paris. Once inside the walls they would meet with no resistance there —the fighting would only commence when they entered the city itself. Passy was to a large extent inhabited by well-to-do people, and it was not here that the search for Communists would begin. The troops would here be greeted as benefactors.

"I do not think there is the smallest risk, Mary; if there were, I should say at once that we had better be off, and I would escort you down to Cornwall, but as there seems to me no danger whatever, I should say let us stick to our original plan. I own I should like to see the end of it all. You might amuse yourself at present by making a good-sized Union Jack, which you can hang out of your window when the troops enter. When I see the time approaching, I intend to make an arrangement with the Michauds to establish myself here, so as to undertake the task of explaining, if necessary, but I don't think any explanation will be asked. It is likely enough that as soon as the troops enter they will establish themselves in this quarter before making any further advance; they will know that they have hard fighting before them, and until they have overcome all opposition, will have plenty to think about, and will have no time to spare in making domiciliary visits."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ARNOLD DAMPIERRE had moved from his lodgings in the Quartier Latin at the outbreak of the insurrection, and had taken up his abode in one of the streets leading up to Montmartre. There he was in close connection with many of the leaders of the Commune, his speeches and his regular attendance at their meetings, his connection with Dufaure, who was the president of one of the revolutionary committees, and with his daughter, and the fact that he was an American, had rendered him one of the most conspicuous characters in the Quarter. He would have been named one of the delegates of the Council of the Commune, but he refused the honor, preferring to remain, as he said, "the representative of the great republic across the seas."

More than once Cuthbert met him as he rode about, but only once did they speak. Cuthbert was crossing the square in front of the Hôtel de Ville, when he saw Arnold Dampierre. The latter was on foot and did not notice Cuthbert until he was within a few yards of him; as his eye fell on him he hesitated and then walked on as if about to pass without speaking; Cuthbert, however, held out his hand.

"Why, Dampierre," he said, "you are not going to cut me, are you? There has been no quarrel between us, and the last time we met was when we were lying next to each other in the ambulance."

Dampierre took the offered hand. "No, no," he said with nervous quickness, "no quarrel at all, Hartington, but you see we have gone different ways, that is to say, I have gone out of your way, and thought that you would not care to continue the acquaintance."

"There is no such feeling on my part, I can assure you. There need be no question between us as to the part you have

taken. I am sorry, but it is no concern of mine, and after living in the same house for a year or so, and having faced death side by side at Champigny, no difference of political opinion should interfere with our friendship. Besides, you know," he added with a laugh, "I may want to get you to exert your influence on my behalf. Events are thickening. In troubled times it is always well to have a friend at court, and if I come to be treated as a suspect, I shall refer to you for a character as a peaceable and well-intentioned student of art."

"There is no fear of anything of that sort, Hartington; but should you, by any possibility, get into trouble, you have but to send to me. However, this state of things will not last long, the people are fairly roused now and will soon sweep the butchers of Versailles before them, and a reign of perfect freedom and equality will be established, and the world will witness the spectacle of a free country, purging itself from the tyranny of capital and the abuse of power, under which it has so long groaned. But I have much to do and must be off," and with a hasty shake of the hand he hurried away again.

Cuthbert looked after him. "The poor fellow is fast qualifying for a mad-house," he said; "he has changed sadly, his cheeks are hollow and his eyes unnaturally brilliant. Those patches of color on his cheeks are signs of fever rather than of health. That woman, Minette, is responsible for this ruin. It must end badly one way or the other; the best thing that could happen to him would be to fall in one of these sorties. He has made himself so conspicuous that he is almost certain to be shot when the troops take Paris, unless, indeed, he becomes an actual lunatic before that. Wound up as he is by excitement and enthusiasm he will never bring himself to sneak off in disguise, as most of the men who have stirred up this business will do."

The time passed quickly enough in Paris, events followed each other rapidly, there was scarce a day without fighting, more or less serious. Gradually the troops wrested position after position from the Communists, but not without heavy fighting. The army at Versailles had swelled so rapidly by the

arrival of the prisoners from Germany that even in Paris, where the journals of the Commune endeavored to keep up the spirits of the defenders by wholesale lying as to the result of the fighting outside its walls. It was known that at least a hundred thousand men were now gathered at Versailles.

"There is no doubt of one thing," Cuthbert said, as standing with Mary on the Trocadero, they one day watched the duel, when the guns at Meudon were replying vigorously to the fire of the forts, "I must modify my first opinions as to the courage of the Communists. They have learnt to fight, and allowing for all the exaggeration and bombast of their proclamations, they now stand admirably; they have more than once retaken positions from which they have been driven, and although very little is said about their losses, I was talking yesterday to a surgeon in one of the hospitals, and he tells me that already they must be as great as those throughout the whole of the first siege.

"They are still occasionally subject to panics. For instance, there was a bad one the other night when the troops took the Château of Becon, and again at Clamart, but I fancy that is owing to the mistake the Communists made in forcing men who are altogether opposed to them into their ranks. These men naturally bolt directly they are attacked, and that causes a panic among the others who would have fought had the rest stood. Still, altogether, they are fighting infinitely better than expected, and at Clamart they fought really well in the open for the first time. Before, I own that my only feelings towards the battalions of beetle-browed ruffians from the faubourgs was disgust, now I am beginning to feel a respect for them, but it makes the prospect here all the darker.

"I have no doubt that as soon as McMahon has got all his batteries into position he will open such a fire as will silence the forts and speedily make breaches in the walls; but the real fighting won't begin till they enter. The barricades were at first little more than breastworks, but they have grown and grown until they have become formidable fortifications, and, if

stoutly defended, and with every house occupied by desperate men, it will be terrible work carrying them by assault. However, there are few places where the main defences cannot be turned, for it is impossible to fortify every street. However, if the Communists fight as desperately as we may now expect, in their despair, the work of clearing the whole city must occupy many days."

"It will be very unpleasant in Passy when the batteries on all those heights open fire."

"It would, indeed, if they were to direct their fire in this direction, for they could wipe Passy out altogether in a few hours; but everything shows that Thiers is anxious to spare Paris itself as much as possible. Not a shot has been fired at random, and scarcely a house has been injured. They fire only at the forts and at the batteries on this side, and when they begin in earnest I have no doubt it will be the same. It would be a mere waste of shot to fire up there, and if the Versailles people were to do unnecessary damage it would bring them into odium throughout all France, for it would be said that they were worse than the Prussians."

On the 25th of April, at 8 o'clock in the morning, the long silence of the besiegers' batteries ended. Cuthbert was taking his coffee when he heard a sound like the rumble of a heavy wagon. He ran to his window. There was quiet in the street below, for everyone had stopped abruptly to listen to the roar, and from every window heads appeared. Completing his dressing hastily, he went out and took the first fiacre he met and drove to Passy. The rumble had deepened into a heavy roar; the air quivered with the vibrations, and the shriek of the shells mingled with the deep booming of the guns. When he entered Madame Michaud's, she, her husband and Mary were standing at the open window.

"We have just come down from the top of the house," Mary said, "it is a grand sight from there; will you come up, Cuthbert?"

"Certainly, Mary; you see I was right, and there do not seem to be any shell coming this way."

"No. But we were all desperately alarmed, were we not madame, when they began."

"It was enough to alarm one," Madame Michaud said indignantly, "half the windows were broken, and that was enough to startle one even without the firing."

"It was perfectly natural, madame," Cuthbert agreed; "the first shock is always trying, and even soldiers with seasoned nerves might be excused for starting, when such a din as this commenced."

Cuthbert and Mary went up at once to the roof, where the old gentleman from below had already set up his telescope. He did not need that, however, to observe what was going on. Along almost the whole crest of the eminences round the south and west, heavy guns were playing upon the defences. From the heights of Chatillon, the puffs of white smoke came thick and fast, the battery at the Chateau of Meudon was hard at work, as were those of Brimborien and Breteuil. Mount Valerien was joining in the fray, while batteries on the plateau of Villejuif were firing at the forts of Montrouge and Bicêtre. Without exception, the greater part of the fire was concentrated upon the forts of Issy and Vanves, while attention was also being paid to the batteries at Point de Jour and Porte Maillot.

The Communists replied to the fire steadily, although Issy, which came in for by far the largest share of the attentions of the assailants, fired only a gun now and then, showing that it was still tenanted by the defenders. It was difficult indeed to see how often it replied, for the shell burst so frequently on it that it was difficult to distinguish between their flashes and those of its guns. Through the telescope could be seen how terrible was the effect of the fire; already the fort had lost the regularity of its shape, and the earth, with which it had been thickly covered, was pitted with holes. Presently there was an outburst of firing comparatively close at hand.

"That is the battery on the Trocadero," one of the party exclaimed. "I think that they must be firing at Valerien, I saw several spurts of smoke close to it."

"I hope not," Cuthbert said, "for if Valerien answers, our position here will not be so pleasant."

For an hour Valerien disregarded the shells bursting in and around it, and continuing its fire against Issy.

"That was a good shot," the astronomer said, as he sat with his eyes at his telescope watching the fort. "A shell burst right on one of the embrasures." A minute or two later came a rushing sound, rising rapidly to a scream; instinctively most of those on the roof ducked their heads.

"Valerien is waking up," Cuthbert said; "here comes another."

For an hour Valerien poured its fire upon the battery on the Trocadero, and with so accurate an aim that at the end of that time it was reduced to silence. While the fire was going on, those on the roof went below, for although the precision with which the artillerymen fired was so excellent that there was but slight danger, the trial to the nerves from the rush of the heavy shell was so great that they were glad to leave the roof and to take their places at the windows below. The danger was no less, for had a shell struck the house and exploded, it would have wrecked the whole building, but there was some sense of safety in drawing back behind the shelter of the wall as the missiles were heard approaching.

To the disappointment of the middle class who still remained in Paris, the bombardment was only partly renewed on the following day, and then things went on as before. It was supposed that its effects, great as they had been on the forts most exposed to it, had not come up to the expectations of the besiegers, and the telescope showed that the troops were hard at work erecting a great battery on Montretout, an eminence near St. Cloud. On the night of the 5th of May the whole of the batteries opened fire again, and the troops made a desperate effort to cut the force in Issy from communication either with the town or with Vanves. The National Guard poured out from the city, and for some hours the fighting was very severe, the troops at last succeeding in their object; but as soon as they had done so, the guns on the enciente and those of

Vanves opened so tremendous a fire upon them, that they were forced to abandon the positions they had won.

At the Railway Station at Clamart there was also heavy fighting; the National Guard attacked suddenly and in such overwhelming numbers that after a short but desperate resistance, the garrison of the station were forced to retire. Reinforcements were soon brought up, the troops again advanced and the insurgents were driven out. Their loss during the night was put down as a thousand. On the 8th Montretout, which was armed with 72 heavy guns, opened fire, the rest of the batteries joined in, and for a couple of hours the din was terrific. The next day Issy was captured by the troops. They attacked the village at daybreak, and advancing slowly, capturing house by house, they occupied the church and market-place at noon. Just as they had done so, a battalion of Insurgents were seen advancing, to reinforce the garrison of the Fort. They were allowed to advance to within fifty yards when a heavy volley was poured into them. They halted for a moment, but their colonel rallied them. He was, however, killed by another volley, when the men at once broke, threw away their arms, and ran back to the city gates. The rest of the village was carried with a rush, and when the troops reached the gate of the Fort, it was found open. It was at once occupied, the whole of the defenders having fled, as they saw that the steady advance of the troops would, if they remained, cut them off from escape. The fall of the Fort was so unexpected that the batteries on the heights continued to fire upon it for some time after the troops had gained possession.

The capture of Issy created an immense effect in Paris. General Rossel resigned the command of the insurgent army. He had been a colonel of the engineers, and was an officer of merit, but his political opinions had proved too much for his loyalty to his country and profession; doubtless he had deemed that if, as at first seemed probable, the insurrection would be successful and the revolution triumph, he would become its Napoleon. He now saw the ruin of his hopes; he had forfeited his position and his life, and in the proclamation he is-

sued announcing his resignation he poured out all the bitterness of his disappointment, and told the Commune his opinion of them, namely, that they were utterly incapable, without an idea of the principles either of liberty or of order, and filled only with jealousy and hatred of each other. So scathing was the indictment, that he was at once arrested, but managed to make his escape.

The fire from the batteries on the assailants' right, was now concentrated upon Vanves, which was evacuated by the insurgents two days later. The fall of these forts left the position at Point de Jour unsupported, and indeed the guns remounted at Issy took its defenders in flank, and rendered it impossible for them to work their guns. In their despair the Commune now threw off the mask of comparative moderation, and proceeded to imitate to its fullest extent the government of the Jacobins. Decrees were passed for the establishment of courts to arrest, try, and execute suspected persons without delay, and under the false pretence that prisoners taken by the troops had been executed, the murder of the Archbishop of Paris and other priests, who had been taken and thrown into prison as hostages, was decided upon.

Upon the fall of Issy being known, Cuthbert considered the end to be so near that it would be better for him to take up his abode permanently at Madame Michaud's. She had been pressing him to do so for some time, as she and her husband thought that the presence of an English gentleman there would conduce to their safety when the troops entered Paris. He had indeed spent most of his time there for the last three weeks, but had always returned to his lodgings at night. He, therefore, packed up his pictures and his principal belongings and drove with them to Passy. Two days later he met Arnold Dampierre.

"I am glad to have met you," the latter said, "I have been to our old place, and found that you had left. Minette and I are to be married to-morrow, a civil marriage, of course, and I should be very glad if you will be present as a witness. There is no saying who will be alive at the end of another week, and I should like the marriage to be witnessed by you."

"I will do so with pleasure, Arnold, though it seems scarcely a time for marrying."

"That is true, but if we escape we must escape together. If I am killed I wish her to go over to America and live as mistress of my place there, therefore, I shall place in your hands an official copy of the register of our marriage. Where will she be able to find you after all this is over?"

Cuthbert gave his address at Madame Michaud's.

"I don't suppose I shall stay there long after all is finished here," he said, "but they will know where to forward any letters to me. Would it not be better, Arnold, for you to throw up all this at once and return to your old lodgings, where you may perhaps remain quietly until the search for the leaders of this affair relaxes?"

Arnold shook his head gloomily; "I must go through it to the end. The cause is a noble one, and it is not because its leaders are base, and at the same time wholly incapable men, that I should desert it. Besides, even if I should do so, she would not. No, it is not to be thought of. The marriage will take place at the Mairie of Montmartre, at eleven o'clock to-morrow."

"I will be there, Arnold." Cuthbert walked slowly back to Passy. He was shocked at the dismal shipwreck, of what had seemed a bright and pleasant future, of the man of whom he had seen so much for upwards of a year. Dampierre's life had seemed to offer a fairer chance of happiness and prosperity than that of any other of the students at Monsieur Goudé's. He had an estate amply sufficient to live upon in comfort, and even affluence; and he had artistic tastes that would save him from becoming, like many southern planters, a mere lounger through life. His fatal love for Minette had caused him to throw himself into this insurrection, and to take so prominent a part in it that the chance of his life being spared, did he fall into the hands of the troops, was small indeed; even did he succeed in escaping with Minette his chances of happiness in the future seemed to Cuthbert to be faint indeed. With her passionate impulses she would speedily weary of the tranquil and easy life

on a southern plantation, and, with her, to weary was to seek change, and however that change might come about, it would bring no happiness to her husband.

"I am going to see your rival married to-morrow," he said to Mary.

"What, the model? Don't call her my rival, Cuthbert, it makes me ashamed of myself, even to think that I should have suspected you of caring for that woman we saw on horseback the other day."

"Then we will call her your supposed rival, Mary; yes, she is going to be married to Arnold Dampierre, to-morrow."

"What a time to choose for it," she said, with a shudder. "In a few days Paris will be deluged with blood, for the Commune boasts that every street is mined."

"We need not believe all that, Mary; no doubt the principal streets have been mined, but the Commune have made such a boast of the fact, that you may be sure the French generals will avoid the great thoroughfares as much as possible, and will turn the barricades by advancing along the narrow streets and lanes; besides, it is one thing to dig mines and charge them, and quite another thing to explode them at the right moment in the midst of a desperate fight. However, I agree with you that it is a dismal business, but Arnold explained to me that he did it because he and Minette might have to fly together, or, that if he fell, she might inherit his property. He did not seem to foresee that she too might fall, which is, to my mind as likely as his own death, for as in former fights here, the female Communists will be sure to take their place in the barricades with the men, and, if so, I will guarantee that Minette will be one of the foremost to do so. The production of female fiends seem to be one of the peculiarities of French revolutions. As I told you, I am going to the wedding in order to sign as a witness; I could hardly refuse what I regard as the poor fellow's last request, though it will be a most distasteful business."

"The last time you spoke to him, you said it struck you that he was going out of his mind."

"Yes, I thought so and think so still; his manner was changed to-day; before, he had that restless, nervous, excitable look that is the indication of one phase of insanity; to-day there was the gloomy, brooding sort of look that is equally characteristic of another form of madness.

"At the same time that might be well explained by the circumstances, and I have not the same absolute conviction in his sanity that I had before. I suppose you will not care to honor the wedding ceremony by your presence."

"No, no, Cuthbert, not for anything. You cannot think that I should like to be present at such a ghastly ceremony. I thought the churches were all shut up."

"So they are; the marriage is to be a civil one. They will merely declare themselves man and wife in the presence of an official; he will enter them as such in a register, and the affair will be over. I would not say so to Arnold, but I have serious doubt whether the American authorities would recognize the ceremony as a legal one, did she ever appear there to claim possession. Of course, if he gets away also, it can be put right by another marriage when they get out, or they can stop for a few weeks on their way through England, and be married again there."

"It is all most horrid, Cuthbert."

"Well, if you see it in that light, Mary, I won't press you to go to-morrow, and will give up any passing idea that I may have had, that we might embrace the opportunity and be married at the same time."

"It is lucky that you did not make such a proposition to me in earnest, Cuthbert," Mary laughed, "for if you had, I would assuredly have had nothing more to do with you."

"Oh, yes, you would, Mary, you could not have helped yourself, and you would, in a very short time have made excuses for me on the ground of my natural anxiety to waste no further time before securing my happiness."

"No one could expect any happiness after being married in that sort of way. No, sir, when quite a long time on, we do get married, it shall be in a church in a proper and decent manner.

I don't know that I might not be persuaded to make a sacrifice and do without bridesmaids or even a wedding-breakfast, but everything else must be strictly *en règle.*"

The next morning at the appointed hour, Cuthbert went up to Montmartre. Several men, whose red scarfs showed that they belonged to the Government of the Commune were standing outside. They looked with some surprise at Cuthbert as he strolled quietly up. "I am here, messieurs, to be a witness to the marriage of my friend, Arnold Dampierre."

The manner of the men instantly changed, and one said, "We are here also to witness the marriage of our noble American friend to the daughter of our colleague, Dufaure. Dampierre is within, Dufaure will be here with his daughter in a few minutes." Cuthbert passed through and entered the office where a Commissary of the Commune was sitting at a table. Arnold was speaking to him. He turned as Cuthbert entered.

"Thank you, Hartington. This is not exactly what I had pictured would be the scene at my wedding, but it is not my fault that it must be managed this way, and I intend to have the ceremony repeated if we get safely to England. After all, it is but what you call a Gretna Green marriage."

"Yes, as you say, you can be married again, Arnold, which would certainly be best in all respects, and might save litigation some day. But here they come, I think."

There was a stir at the door, and Minette and her father entered, followed by the Communists with red scarfs. Arnold also wore one of these insignia. Minette was in her dress as a Vivandière. She held out her hand frankly to Cuthbert.

"I am glad to see you here, monsieur," she said. "It is good that Arnold should have one of his own people as a witness. You never liked me very much, I know, but it makes no difference now."

"Please to take your place," the officer said. Cuthbert stepped back a pace. Arnold took his place in front of the table with Minette by his side, her father standing close to her.

"There is nothing, Arnold Dampierre," the official asked,

"in the laws of your country that would prevent you making a binding marriage."

"Nothing whatever. When a man is of age in America he is free to contract any marriage he chooses without obtaining the consent of any relation whatever."

The official made a note of this. "Martin Dufaure, do you give your sanction and consent to the marriage of your daughter with Arnold Dampierre, American citizen."

"I do," the Communist said.

"Take her hand, Arnold Dampierre."

"Do you take this woman as your wife?"

As the words left his lips, there was a pistol-shot. With a low cry, Arnold fell across the table. Cuthbert had turned at the report, and as the man who had fired, lowered his pistol to repeat the shot, he sprang forward, and struck him with all his weight and strength on the temple. The man fell like a log, his pistol exploding as he did so. With a cry like that of a wounded animal Minette had turned around, snatched a dagger from her girdle, and, as the man fell, she sprang to his side and leant over him with uplifted knife. Cuthbert caught her wrist as she was about to strike.

"Do not soil your hand with blood, Minette," he said quietly as she turned fiercely upon him. "Arnold would not like it; leave this fellow to justice, and give your attention to him."

Dropping the knife she ran forward to the table again, two or three of Arnold's colleagues were already leaning over him. Believing that her lover was dead, Minette would have thrown herself on his body, but they restrained her.

"He is not dead, Minette, the wound is not likely to be fatal, he is only hit in the shoulder."

"You are lying, you are lying, he is dead," Minette cried, struggling to free herself from their restraining arms.

"It is as they say, Minette," her father said, leaning over Arnold, "here is the bullet hole in his coat, it is the same shoulder that was broken before; he will recover, child, calm yourself, I order you."

Minette ceased to struggle, and burst into a passion of tears.

"You had better send a man to fetch a surgeon at once," Cuthbert said to one of the Communists. "I have no doubt Arnold has but fainted from the shock, coming as it did at such a moment." He then looked at the wound.

"'Tis not so serious as the last," he said, "by a long way, it is higher and has no doubt broken the collar bone, but that is not a very serious matter. I think we had better lay him down on that bench, put a coat under his head, pour a few drops of spirits between his lips, and sprinkle his face with cold water."

Cuthbert then went across the room. Several of the Communists were standing round the fallen man.

"He is stunned I think," Cuthbert said.

"He is dead," one of the men replied. "Your blow was enough to kill an ox. It is the best thing for him, for assuredly he would have been hung before nightfall for this attempt upon the life of our good American colleague."

Cuthbert stooped down and felt the pulse of the fallen man.

"I am afraid he is dead," he said, "certainly I had no intention of killing him. I thought of nothing but preventing him repeating his shot, which he was on the point of doing."

"It does not matter in the least," one of the men said, "it is all one whether he was shot by a bullet of the Versaillais, or hung, or killed by a blow of an Englishman's fist. Monsieur le Commissaire, will you draw up a proces-verbal of this affair?"

But the Commissary did not answer; in the confusion no one noticed that he had not risen from his chair, but sat leaning back.

"Diable, what is this?" the Communist went on, "I believe the Commissary is dead." He hurried round to the back of the table. It was as he said, the shot fired as the man fell had struck him in the heart, and he had died without a cry or a movement.

"Morbleau," another of the Communists exclaimed, "we came here to witness a comedy, and it has turned into a tragedy."

An exclamation from Minette, who was kneeling by Arnold,

called Cuthbert's attention to her. The American had opened his eyes.

"What has happened, Minette," he asked, as she laid her head down on his breast and burst into another fit of passionate sobbing.

"You are out of luck, Arnold," Cuthbert said, cheerfully; "a villain has fired at you, but you have got off this time more lightly than the last, and I think it is nothing more than a broken collar-bone, and that is not a very serious business, you know; be quiet for a little time; we shall have the surgeon here directly. Of course Minette is terribly upset, for she thought for a moment that you were killed."

Arnold lay still, stroking Minette's head gently with his right hand; gradually her sobs ceased, and Cuthbert then left them to themselves. The two bodies had by this time been carried into another room, and one of the delegates took his seat at the table and drew out a formal report of the occurrences that had taken place which was signed by the others present and by Cuthbert. A surgeon presently arriving confirmed Cuthbert's view that the collar-bone had been broken, and proceeded to bandage it.

As soon as it was done Arnold stood up unsteadily. "Citizen Rigaud, I presume that, as a high official of the Commune, you can replace the citizen who has fallen and complete the ceremony."

"Certainly, if it is your wish."

"It is my wish more even than before."

"The matter is simple," the delegate said, "my predecessor has already recorded your answers, there remains but for me to complete the ceremony.

A minute later Arnold Dampierre and Minette were pronounced man and wife, and signed the register, Martin Dufaure, Cuthbert, and the various deputies present signing as witnesses. A fiacre had been called up, and was in readiness at the door. Cuthbert assisted Arnold to take his place in it.

"If I were you, Arnold," he whispered, "I would go to the old lodgings; of course they are still vacant; if you prefer it,

you can take mine, I still keep them on though I have moved for a time. It will be better for you in every way not to be up here at Montmartre."

"Thank you; it would anyhow be quieter. Will you tell the coachman where to drive?"

"I will go on the box," Cuthbert said, "of course Dufaure will go with you." He told the Communist what they had decided on.

"That will be best," he agreed; "this is not a quiet quarter at present. What with drumming and drinking, it is not a place for a wounded man."

"You had better go inside with them, and I will go on the box," Cuthbert said, "keep Minette talking, it will prevent her breaking down, it has been a terrible shock for her."

The landlady was heartily glad to see Dampierre back again. Cuthbert and the Communist assisted the wounded man to bed.

"I will see about getting things in at present," Cuthbert said, "so do not worry over that, Minette; if everything goes well he will be about again in a few days, but keep him quiet as long as you can, I will come in to-morrow and see how he is getting on."

After going round to a restaurant and ordering meals to be sent in regularly, with some bottles of wine for Martin Dufaure's benefit, Cuthbert returned to Passy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MARY was greatly shocked upon hearing the tragic circumstances that had occurred at the wedding.

"Who is the man that fired, Cuthbert?"

"His name is Jean Diantre. I heard from Dufaure that he has been a lover of Minette's; he said she had never given him any encouragement, but acknowledged that he himself believed she might have taken him at last if she had not met Dampierre. He said that he had been uneasy for some time, for the man

had become so moody and savage that he had feared ill would come of it. He was the same man who nearly stabbed me three months ago, taking me for Dampierre."

"It is shocking to think that you have killed a man, Cuthbert."

"It may be shocking to you, Mary, but the matter does not weigh on my conscience at all. In the first place I had no idea of killing him, and in the second, if I had not hit hard and quickly he would have fired again and killed Arnold; lastly, I regard these Communists as no better than mad dogs, and the chances are ten to one that he would have been shot at the barricades, or afterwards, if he had not died when he did."

"It is all very terrible," Mary sighed.

"It has all been terrible from beginning to end, Mary, but as hundreds of men are killed every day, and there will probably be thousands shot when the troops enter Paris, I cannot regard the death of a would-be murderer as a matter that will weigh on my mind for a moment. And now what has been going on here? I hardly had time to notice whether the firing was heavy."

"It has been tremendous," she said. "Several houses have been struck and set on fire lower down but no shells have come this way."

"I have no doubt the troops imagine that all the houses down near Pont du Jour, are crowded with Communists in readiness to repel any assault that might be made. The army is doubtless furious at the destruction of the Column of Vendôme, which was in commemoration, not only of Napoleon, but of the victories won by French armies. Moreover, I know from newspapers that have been brought in from outside, and which I have seen at the café, that they are incensed to the last degree by being detained here, when but for this insurrection, they would have been given a furlough to visit their families when they returned from the German prisons. So that I can quite understand the artillerymen taking a shot occasionally at houses they believe to be occupied by the insurgents.

"You may be sure of one thing, and that is that very little

quarter will be shown to the Communists by the troops. Even now, I cannot but hope, that seeing the impossibility of resisting many days longer, and the certainty of a terrible revenge if the troops have to fight their way through the streets, the Communists will try to surrender on the best terms they can get. Thiers has all along shown such extreme unwillingness to force the fighting, that I am sure he would give far better terms than they could have any right to expect, rather than that Paris should be the scene of a desperate struggle, and, if the Communists fulfil their threats, of wholesale destruction and ruin."

Two more days passed. Cuthbert went down each day to his old lodging and found that Arnold was doing well. On the second day, indeed, he was out of bed with his arm in a sling and sitting partly dressed in an easy-chair. Martin Dufaure had left that morning for his own lodging, having slept for the last two nights on the sofa. Minette had made everything about the rooms tidy and fresh, the windows were open, and the distant roar of the bombardment could be plainly heard. She had a white handkerchief tied over her head, a neat, quiet dress, and was playing the rôle of nurse to perfection. Cuthbert had been round to Monsieur Goudé and had told him what had happened, and he had the evening before dropped in for a talk with Arnold.

"I am getting on wonderfully, Cuthbert," Arnold said, on the latter's second visit. "Of course it is trying to be sitting here incapable of taking a part in what is going on."

"You have taken quite enough part, Arnold, and I own I think your wound at the present moment is a fortunate one, for it will keep you out of mischief. When the surgeon comes next I should strongly advise you to get him to write you a certificate certifying that you have been wounded by a pistol ball, so that if, as is probable, there will sooner or later be a general search for Communists, you can prove that your injury was not received in the fighting outside the walls, and you can refer to Goudé and me as to the fact that you are an art student here. Both documents had better be made out in another name than your

own, for, unfortunately, yours has been rendered familiar to them by the frequent notices of your doings and speeches in the papers here."

"I will see about it," Arnold said; "I do not know that I can bring myself to that."

"You will be very foolish and wrong not to do so, Arnold. You are a married man now, and have your wife to think about as well as yourself. You may be sure that there is not a single leader of the insurrection here who will not endeavor to escape under a false name; besides, even granting that, as you believe, the cause is a righteous one, you certainly cannot benefit it in the slightest by sacrificing your life. Your wife was a Communist Vivandière a few days ago, now she is a quiet little wife nursing a sick husband." Glancing at Minette he saw an angry flush on her face, and a look of dogged determination; he made no remark, however, and after chatting with Arnold for some time returned to Passy.

"That woman will bring destruction on them both or I am mistaken," he said to Mary; "fond as she may be of Dampierre, her enthusiasm for the Commune will take her from his side when the last struggle begins. Do you know, Mary, my presentiments about her have turned out marvellously correct." He opened his sketch-book. "Look at that," he said; "at the time I sketched it she was poised as a Spanish dancer, and had castanets in her hand; the attitude is precisely that in which she stood as a model, but it struck me at the moment that a knife would be more appropriate to her than a castanet, and you see I drew her so, and that is the precise attitude she stood in, dagger in hand, when I caught her wrist and prevented her from stabbing the man at her feet."

"Don't show them to me, Cuthbert, it frightens me when you talk of her."

"You must remember that she is a mixture, Mary; she is like a panther, as graceful, and as supple; a charming beast when it purrs and rubs itself against the legs of its keeper, terrible when, in passion, it hurls itself upon him. In the early days the students were, to a man, fascinated with her. I stood

quite alone in my disapproval. Seeing her as I saw her to-day, I admit that she is charming, but I cannot forget her fury as she bounded, knife in hand, upon the man I had knocked down. Listen! do your hear that rattle of musketry down by Pont du Jour? The troops must be working their way up towards the gate. Possibly, it is the beginning of the end."

Presently a Communist, with a red sash, rode furiously past, and in a quarter of an hour returned with a battalion of National Guards who had been stationed near the Arc de Triomphe.

"Evidently, there is a some sharp business going on, Mary. It is hardly likely the troops can be attacking at this time of day, they would be sure to choose early morning, mass their forces under cover of darkness, and go at the gate at daybreak; still, there is no doubt from that musketry firing, they must be trying to establish themselves nearer the gate than before."

The batteries that had all day been playing upon Pont du Jour, had suddenly ceased firing, but the rattle of musketry in that direction continued as hotly as ever for another two hours, and a number of field-guns joined in the conflict on the side of the Communists.

"I really must go and find out what it is all about," Cuthbert said; "if I could get up near the Viaduct, I should be able to look down into the bastions at Pont du Jour."

"Don't be away long," Mary urged, "I shall be feeling very nervous till you get back."

"I won't be long; I shan't stay to watch the affair, but only just to find out what the situation is. The fact that the Communists have brought up Field Artillery, shows that it is something more than ordinary, although, why the batteries opposite should have ceased to play I cannot make out; they are hard at work everywhere else."

Cuthbert made his way towards the Viaduct, and as he approached it saw that some of the field-guns he had heard had been placed there, and that the parapet was lined with National Guards who were keeping up an incessant fire. Shells from Meudon and Fort Issy were bursting thickly over and near the bridge, and Cuthbert, seeing that he could not get further with-

out being exposed to the fire, and might, moreover, get into trouble with the Communists, made his way down towards Pont du Jour. Several people were standing in shelter behind the wall of one of the villas.

"You had better not go farther," one of them said, "a shell burst twenty yards lower down a few minutes ago. Several of the villas are in flames, and bullets are flying about everywhere."

"What is going on, gentlemen?" Cuthbert asked, as he joined them.

"The troops have entered Pont du Jour."

"Impossible!" Cuthbert exclaimed, "the firing has been heavy, but no heavier than usual, and although the village is knocked to pieces, as I saw for myself yesterday, no great harm was done to the bastions."

"They have entered for all that," one of the gentlemen said. "Several wounded Communists have come along here, and they have all told the same story. Of course, they put it down to the treachery of their leaders, but at any rate, owing to the tremendous fire from the upper batteries and Issy, it was absolutely impossible to keep men in the bastions, and they were all withdrawn. A few were left in the houses and gardens, but the greater part fell back behind the Viaduct, which afforded them shelter. Somehow or other, the troops in the sap that had been pushed forward to within fifty yards of the gate must have come to the conclusion that the bastion was not tenanted, and trying the experiment, found themselves inside the wall without a shot having been fired. More must have followed them, at any rate a considerable force must have gathered there before the Communists found out they had entered. There can be no doubt that it was a surprise, and not a preconcerted movement, for the batteries continue to fire on the place for some time after they had entered.

"In a short time, small bodies of soldiers ran across the open where the shells were still bursting thickly, established themselves in the ruins of the village, and, as they received reinforcements, gradually worked their way forwards. The Communists have brought up strong forces, but so far, they have been unable

to drive back the troops, and, of course, their chance of doing so grows less and less. We can hear heavy firing all along to the right, and it seems as if the troops were pushing forward all along the line from here to Neuilly. Thank God, the end of this terrible business is approaching, and by to-morrow morning we may see the troops in Passy, where there is scarce a soul but will welcome them with open arms. Our battalion of National Guards was one of the last to accept the orders of the Commune, and as it must be known in Versailles as well as in Paris, that this quarter is thoroughly loyal, we need fear no trouble. We are going back there with the news, for we can see nothing here, and if a battalion of Communists came along beaten, they would be as likely as not to vent their fury on all whom they see by their appearance and dress are likely to sympathize with the troops."

Cuthbert walked back with them to Passy.

"Good news," he exclaimed, as he entered the room, where Mary and the Michauds were standing at the open window; "the troops are masters of Point du Jour, and the Communists have tried in vain to drive them back. No doubt, at present, the whole French army is being brought up, in readiness to enter as soon as it is dark, and by to-morrow morning this part of the town at any rate may be clear of the Communists."

Exclamations of delight burst from the others. "I will run up to the roof," Cuthbert said, "there is heavy musketry fire going on all along this side, and one may get an idea how matters are going, but we may be sure that the Communists will all fall back upon the city as soon as they know the troops have entered here."

Mary went up with him, and they found the astronomer had already his telescope in position.

"I have good news for you, Monsieur," Cuthbert said; "the troops have entered Pont du Jour, and although the Communists are opposing them in great force, they are making their way forward. It has evidently been a surprise all round, and so far no great body of troops have been brought up, but no doubt they will soon be ready to advance in force."

"That is good news indeed. I have been watching Asnieres, and as far as I can make out a large body of troops have crossed the bridge there, and are skirmishing towards the enciente, and gradually driving back the Communists. They have advanced too from Neuilly and are pressing forward towards Porte Maillot. Mount Valerien seems to be firing at Montmartre."

Nightfall brought no cessation of the roar of cannon, and the roll of musketry seemed to be continuous, both from the left and right. Every window at Passy was lit up; there was a crowd of women at every shop where colored materials could be obtained, and in every house the females were engaged in sewing red, white, and blue stuff of every description to make the National tri-colored flags, in readiness to hang out when the troops came along. Occasionally adventurous boys and young men came in with scraps of news; the Viaduct had been carried before darkness set in, a heavy column of troops had captured a strong barricade across the road, and, following the bank of the river, had taken possession of the bridge of Grenelle. Another division turning to the left had carried the gas works, while a third had captured the Asylum of St. Perrine.

It was at the Trocadero that the insurgents were expected to make a stand in earnest. Here they had erected formidable works, and were reported to be hard at work mounting guns and mitrailleuses there. The troops, however, gave them no time to complete their preparations. A column entered a little before midnight by the gate of Passy, pushed on to the bridge of Jena, carried it after a sharp fight, and then charged at the double towards the heights of the Trocadero, where the Communists, taken completely by surprise, fled precipitously after a slight resistance, and at one o'clock in the morning the loyalists were in possession of this important position. At midnight another division entered at the Porte Maillot, and advancing took possession of the Arc de Triomphe.

At two o'clock the head of the French column came down the street. In an instant candles were placed at every window, flags were hung out, and the inhabitants poured into the street

and welcomed their deliverers with shouts of joy. The troops piled their arms and fell out, and as soon as they did so, men and women brought out jugs of wine and provisions of all kinds. In half an hour the inhabitants were ordered to return to their houses, and the troops wrapping themselves in their blankets laid down in the roadway to get two or three hours, sleep before the heavy work expected in the morning. At five they were on their feet again. Already the din of battle had recommenced. At daybreak Bruat's division crossed the Seine by the Viaduct, kept along the left bank, drove the insurgents from the great iron foundry of Cail, and entered the Champs de Mars.

The Communists fought stubbornly here, but a corps was sent round to turn their position, and seeing their retreat threatened, they broke and fled, and the École Militaire was taken possession of without further resistance. General Cissey's division entered by the gate of Mont Rouge, where the Communists, threatened in the rear by Bruat's advance, fell back at their approach. Moving along the Boulevard Mont Rouge they came upon very strong and formidable barricades, defended by six cannon and mitrailleuses, supported by musketry fire from the houses. The position was so strong that even with the assistance of the artillery Cissey was unable to advance farther in this direction.

Bruat's division met with strong opposition at the Cartridge Factory in the Avenue Rapp, and the Reds were only driven out at last by artillery being brought up and shelling them out. After this Bruat pushed on, captured and occupied without resistance the Invalides, and the Palais Legislatif, opposite the Place de la Concorde.

On the right bank the troops advanced from the Arc de Triomphe at the double and carried the Palais de L'Industrie after a short resistance. By mid-day the whole of the Champs Elysées as far as the barrier of the Place de la Concorde were in possession of the troops.

Late in the afternoon the division of General Clinchamp marched down on the Rue Faubourg St. Honoré, came out

upon the Boulevard and took possession of the Madeleine and the Grand Opera House. While these operations had been carried on the Communists, batteries on Montmartre had thrown shells over the whole area occupied by the troops, while Mont Valerien and the other batteries facing the western side maintained a heavy fire upon those of Montmartre.

Early in the morning all the members of the National Guard of Passy and Auteuil were summoned to arms and ordered to assist the troops, and were specially enjoined to maintain order in their rear as they advanced. Numbers of Communist prisoners were taken by the troops as they worked their way forward, and upwards of 8,000 were despatched under a strong escort to Versailles. The order for the National Guard to assemble was received with intense satisfaction, the younger and unmarried men had been forced into the ranks of the Communists, but many had during the last day or two slipped away and remained in hiding, and all were anxious to prove that it was loyalty and not cowardice that had caused them to desert.

Cuthbert was out all day watching, from points where he could obtain shelter from the flying bullets, the advance of the troops. When he returned he told Mary that everything was going on well so far, but he added, "The work is really only beginning; the barrier at the Place de la Concorde and the batteries on the terrace of the Tuileries are really formidable positions, and I hear that on the south side the advance has been entirely arrested by one of the barricades there. The Insurgents never intended to hold the outlying suburbs, and even the batteries on the Trocadero were built to aid the Forts and not for fighting inside the walls. You see every yard the troops gain now drives the Communists closer and closer together, and renders the defence more easy. It may be a week yet before the Commune is finally crushed. I should think that before the troops advance much further on this side they will storm Montmartre, whose batteries would otherwise take them in rear."

The next day three divisions marched against Montmartre, and attacked it simultaneously on three sides. The Communists

here who had throughout the siege been the loudest and most vehement in their warlike demonstrations, now showed that at heart they were cowards. Although their batteries were armed with over a hundred guns, they offered but a momentary resistance and fled, panic-stricken, in every direction, some thousands being taken prisoners by the troops. On the other hand, throughout the rest of Paris, the fighting became more and more severe and desperate. The Northern Railway Station was defended successfully throughout the day. On the south side of the river but little progress was made by the troops, and they remained stationary also in the Champs Elysées, the barriers in front being too strong to be stormed without frightful loss. These, however, would be turned by the divisions who had captured Montmartre, and the troops descending by different routes to the Boulevard des Italiennes, worked their way along as far as the Porte St. Denis, and this threatened the flank of the defenders of the Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries.

The roar of fire was unbroken all day, the Forts, that had not yet fallen into the hands of the troops, bombarded all the quarters that had been captured, and were aided by powerful batteries at Belleville, at Vilette, and above all by those on the Buttes du Chaumont, where the Cemetery of Père la Chaise had been converted into an entrenched camp, the positions here being defended by 20,000 of the best troops of Paris. In the western quarters things had resumed their normal state; the shops were opened, children played in the streets, and women gossipped at the doors, there were men about too, for the order for the reassembling of the National Guard of this quarter had been cancelled, having met with the strongest opposition in the Assembly at Versailles.

The astronomer downstairs turned out a very useful acquaintance, for hearing from Cuthbert, that he was extremely anxious to obtain a pass that would permit him to move about near the scenes of fighting without the risk of being seized and shot as a Communist, he said that he was an intimate friend of Marshal McMahon and should be glad to obtain a pass for

him. On going to the quarters where the Marshal had established himself, he brought back an order authorizing Cuthbert Hartington, a British subject, to circulate everywhere in quarters occupied by the troops.

"It is too late to go down this evening, Mary," he said, "but I expect that to-morrow a great attack upon the positions round the Tuileries will take place, and I shall try and get somewhere where I can see without being in the line of fire. I will take care to run no risk, dear; you see my life is more precious to me now than it was when I joined the Franc tireurs des Écoles."

It was difficult to stop quietly indoors when so mighty a struggle was going on almost within sight, and at ten o'clock in the evening he and Mary went out to the Trocadero. The flashes of fire from the Loyal and Communist batteries were incessant. Away on the south side was a constant flicker of musketry as Cissey's troops struggled with the defender of the barricades. An incessant fire played along the end of the Champs Elysées, flashed from the windows of the Tuileries and fringed the parapet of the south side of the river facing the Palais. Fires were blazing in various parts of Paris, the result of the bombardment. The city looked strangely dark, for the men at the gas works were for the most part fighting in the ranks of the insurgents. The sky was lined with sparks of fire moving in arcs and marking the course of the shell as they traversed to and fro from battery to battery, or fell on the city.

"It is a wonderful sight, Mary."

"Wonderful, but very terrible," she replied; "it is all very well to look at from here, but only think what it must be for those within that circle of fire."

"I have no pity for the Communists," Cuthbert said, "not one spark. They would not pull a trigger or risk a scratch for the defence of Paris against the Germans, now they are fighting like wild-cats against their countrymen. Look there," he exclaimed, suddenly, "there is a fire broken out close to the Place de la Concorde, a shell must have fallen there. I fancy it must be within the barricades, but none of the batteries on either side

would have been likely to send a shell there at night, as it is so close to the line of division that the missile would be as likely to strike friend as foe."

Higher and higher mounted the flames, spreading as they went till a huge mass of fire lighted up all that part of Paris.

"It must be a great public building of some sort," Cuthbert said.

"See, another building is on fire a short distance away from it; look, Cuthbert, look is that the reflection of the flames in the windows of the Tuileries or is it on fire?

"It is fire," Cuthbert exelaimed after a minute's pause; "see the flames have burst through that window on the first floor. Good heavens, the Communists are carrying out their threat to lay Paris in ashes before they yield."

In five minutes all doubt was at an end, the flames were pouring out from every window on the first floor of the Palais, and it was evident the fire must have been lighted in a dozen places simultaneously.

By this time the Trocadero was thronged with spectators attracted by the light in the sky, and by the report that one of the public buildings was on fire; exclamations of fury and grief, and execrations upon the Communists rose everywhere, when it was seen that the Tuileries were in flames. From points at considerable distances from each other fresh outbreaks of fire took place. Most of those standing round were able to locate them, and it was declared that the Palace of the Court of Accounts, the Ministries of War and Finance, the palaces of the Legion of Honor and of the Council of State, the Prefecture of Police the Palace de Justice, the Hôtel de Ville and the Palais Royale were all on fire. As the night went on the scene became more and more terrible. Paris was blazing in at least twenty places, and most of the conflagrations were upon an enormous scale. The scene was too fascinating and terrible to be abandoned, and it was not until the morning began to break that the spectators on the Trocadero returned to their homes.

CHAPTER XXV.

Armed with his pass Cuthbert started for the city at ten o'clock next morning. A dense pall of smoke hung over Paris. On the south side of the river the conflict was still raging, as it was also on the north and east, but the insurgents' shells were no longer bursting up the Champs Elysées and the firing had ceased at the Placc de la Concorde. It was evident that the insurgents, after performing their work of destruction, had evacuated their position there. On reaching the bottom of the Champs Elysèes he found that a breach had been made in the barricade and that a considerable number of troops were bivouacked in the Plaee de la Concorde itself.

The fire-engines from Versailles, St. Denis, and other places round were already at work, but their efforts seemed futile indeed in face of the tremendous bodies of fire with which they had to cope. Just as Cuthbert, after passing through the breach in the barricade, on the presentation of his pass to the sentries, arrived at the end of the Rue Rivoli, a mounted officer dashed up to the two engines at work opposite the building that had first been fired, and said—

"You can do no good here. Take your engines to the courtyard of the Tuileries and aid the troops in preventing the fire from spreading to the Louvre. That is the only place where there is any hope of doing good. Now, monsieur," he said to Cuthbert, "You must fall in and aid the Pompiers. The orders are that all able-bodied men are to help in extinguishing the fire."

Cuthbert was glad to be of use, and joining the firemen ran along with the engines down the Rue Rivoli and turned in with them into the courtyard of the palace. The western end, containing the State apartments, was a mass of fire from end to end, and the flames were creeping along both wings towards the Louvre. In the palace itself a battalion of infantry were at work.

Some were throwing furniture, pictures and curtains through the window into the courtyard; others were hacking off doors and tearing up floors, while strong parties were engaged on the roofs in stripping off the slates and tearing down the beams and linings.

Other engines presently arrived, for telegrams had been sent off soon after the fires broke out to all the principal towns of France, and even to London, asking for engines and men to work them, and those from Amiens, Lille, and Rouen had already reached Paris by train.

After working for three hours Cuthbert showed his pass to the officer and was permitted to pass on, a large number of citizens being by this time available for the work, having been fetched from all the suburbs occupied by the troops. Before going very much farther Cuthbert was stopped by a line of sentries across the street.

"You cannot pass here," the officer in charge said, as Cuthbert produced his permit, "the island is still in the hands of the Communists, and the fire from their barricade across the bridge sweeps the street twenty yards farther on, and it would be certain death to show yourself there; besides, they are still in force beyond the Hôtel de Ville. You can, of course, work round by the left, but I should strongly advise you to go no farther. There is desperate fighting going on in the Place de la Bastille. The insurgent batteries are shelling the Boulevards hotly, and, worst of all, you are liable to be shot from the upper windows and cellars. There are scores of those scoundrels still in the houses; there has been no time to unearth them yet, and a good many men have been killed by their fire."

"Thank you, sir. I will take your advice," Cuthbert said.

He found, indeed, that there was no seeing anything that was going on in the way of fighting without running great risks, and he accordingly made his way back to the Trocadero. Here he could see that a number of fires had broken out at various points since morning, even in the part of the town occupied by the troops; and though some of these might be caused by the Communists' shell it was more probable that they were the work of the incendiary. He had, indeed, heard from some of the citizens

to whom he had spoken while at work at the pumps, that orders had been issued that all gratings and windows giving light to cellars, should be closed by wet sacks being piled against them, and should then be covered thickly with earth, as several women had been caught in the act of pouring petroleum into the cellars and then dropping lighted matches down upon it.

These wretches had been shot instantly, but the fresh fires continually springing up showed that the work was still going on.

It was strangely silent in the streets. With the exception of the sentries at every corner there were few persons indeed abroad. Many were looking from the windows, but few, indeed, ventured out. They knew not what orders had been given to the sentries and feared arrest were they to stir beyond their doors. Moreover, the occasional crash of a shell from the insurgent batteries, the whistling of bullets, and the frequent discharge of musket shots still kept up by groups of desperate Communists who had taken refuge in the houses, was sufficient alone to deter them from making any attempt to learn what was going on. But in the absence of footfalls in the street and of the sound of vehicles, the distant noises were strangely audible. The rustle of the flames at the Hôtel de Ville and the great fires across the river, the crash of the falling roofs and walls, the incessant rattle of distant musketry, and the boom of cannon, formed a weird contrast to the silence that prevailed in the quarter. Cuthbert felt that he breathed more freely when he issued out again into the Champs Elysées.

The next day he did not go down. The advance continued, but progress was slow. On the following morning Paris was horrified by the news published in the papers at Versailles that statements of prisoners left no doubt that the Archbishop of Paris and many other priests, in all a hundred persons, had been massacred in cold blood, the methods of the first revolution being closely followed, and the prisoners made to walk out one by one from the gate of the prison, and being shot down as they issued out. Another statement of a scarcely less appalling nature was that the female fiends of the Commune not only

continued their work of destruction by fire, but were poisoning the troops. Several instances of this occurred. In one case ten men were poisoned by one of these furies, who came out as they passed, and expressing joy at the defeat of the Commune, offered them wine. They drank it unsuspectingly, and within an hour were all dead. Orders, were consequently issued that no soldier should on any account accept drink or food of any kind offered them by women.

"This horrible massacre of the Archbishop and the other prisoners is next door to madness," Cuthbert said, as he read the account at breakfast. "The Communists could have no personal feeling of hostility against their victims, indeed, the Archbishop was, I know, most popular. Upon the other hand it seals the fate of thousands. The fury excited by such a deed will be so great that the troops will refuse to give quarter and the prisoners taken will have to suffer to the utmost for the crime committed by perhaps a handful of desperate wretches. The omnibuses began to run yesterday from Sevres, and I propose, Mary, that we go over to Versailles to-day and get out of sound of the firing. They say there are fully 20,000 prisoners there."

"I don't want to see the prisoners," Mary said, with a shudder. "I should like to go to Versailles, but let us keep away from horrors."

And so for a day they left the sound of battle behind, wandered together through the Park at Versailles, and carefully abstained from all allusion to the public events of the past six months. The next day Cuthbert returned to Paris and made his way down to the Place de la Bastille, where, for the sum of half a Napoleon, he obtained permission to ascend to the upper window of a house. The scene here was terrible. On the side on which he was standing a great drapery establishment, known as the Bon Marché, embracing a dozen houses, was in flames. In the square itself three batteries of artillery belonging to Ladmirault's Division, were sending their shell up the various streets debouching on the place.

Most of the houses on the opposite side were in flames. The

insurgent batteries on the Buttes de Chaumont were replying to the guns of the troops. The infantry were already pressing their way upwards. Some of the barricades were so desperately defended that the method by which alone the troops on the south side had been able to capture these defences, was adopted ; the troops taking possession of the houses and breaking their way with crow-bar and pick-axe through the party wall, and so, step by step, making their way along under cover until they approached the barricades, which they were then able to make untenable by their musketry fire from the windows. Cuthbert remained here for an hour or two, and then making a detour came out on the Boulevards higher up.

The Theatre of Porte St. Martin was in flames, as were many other buildings. A large number of troops with piled arms occupied the centre of the street, taking their turn to rest before they relieved their comrades in the work of assault. Presently he saw down a side street a party of soldiers with some prisoners. He turned down to see what was going on. The officer in command of the party came up to him.

"Monsieur has doubtless a pass," he said, politely.

Cuthbert produced it.

"Ah, you are English, monsieur. It is well for you that your country does not breed such wretches as these. Every one of them has been caught in the course of the last hour in the act of setting houses alight. They are now to be shot."

"It is an unpleasant duty, monsieur," Cuthbert said.

"It would be horrible at any other time," the officer said. "But we cannot consider these creatures as human beings. They are wild beasts and I verily believe the women are worse than the men. There is only one I would spare, though she is the worst of all. At every barricade where the fighting has been fiercest for the last four days she has been conspicuous. The troops got to know her by her red cap and dress. She has been seen to shoot down men who attempted to retire, and she has led a charmed life or she would have been killed a thousand times. When she was taken she had on an old dress over her red one, and a hideous bonnet in place of the cap. She was

caught just as she had dropped a lighted match into a cellar. The flames flashed up at once, and two soldiers near ran up and arrested her. She stabbed one, but the other broke her wrist with a blow from the butt of his musket.

"Then came a curious thing. A man who had been standing in a doorway on the opposite side of the street ran out and declared that he was a sharer in her crime. His air was that of a madman, and the men would have pushed him away, but he exclaimed, 'I am Arnold Dampierre, one of the leaders of the Commune. This is my wife.' Then the woman said, 'The man is mad. I have never seen him before. I know Arnold Dampierre—everyone knows him. He does not resemble this man, whose proper place is a lunatic asylum.' So they contended, and both were brought before the drumhead Court Martial.

"The man had so wild an air that we should not have believed his story, but on his being searched his American passport was found upon him. Then the woman threw herself into his arms. 'We will die together then!' she said. 'I would have saved you if you would have let me.' Then she turned to us. 'Yes, I am guilty. I have fought against you on the barricades,' and she tore off her outer dress and bonnet. 'I have kindled twenty fires, but in this I am guilty alone. He stood by me on the barricades, but he would have nothing to do with firing houses. But I am a Parisian. I am the daughter of Martin Dufaure, who was killed an hour since, and my duty was to the Commune first, and to my husband afterwards. I hate and despise you slaves of tyrants. You have conquered us but we have taught a lesson to the men who fatten on our suffering.'

"Of course they were both ordered to be shot. I have given them all five minutes, but the time is up. Range them by the wall, men," he said, turning to the soldiers.

Cuthbert glanced for a moment and then turned away. The other women were mostly old, or at least middle-aged, and they stood scowling at the soldiers, and some of them pouring out the foulest imprecations upon them.

Minette stood in the centre of the line conspicuous by her red dress. One hand grasped that of Arnold, who was gazing upon her as if oblivious to all else. Her head was held erect and she looked at her executioners with an air of proud defiance.

Cuthbert hurried away, filled with an intense feeling of pity and regret. He heard Minette cry in a loud clear voice, "Vive la Commune!" Then there was a sharp volley and all was over, and a minute later the soldiers passed him on the way to join their comrades.

He stood for a time at the corner of the street irresolute. He had seen scores of dead in the streets. He had thought he could see nothing worse than he had witnessed, but he felt that he could not go back, as he had first thought of doing, to the scene of execution. Comrades had fallen by his side in the fight at Champigny, but he had not felt for them as for this comrade who lay behind him, or for the girl who, with her talents, might have had a bright future before her had she been thrown amid other surroundings. He wondered whether he could obtain their bodies for burial.

It did not seem to him possible. Vehicles could not be obtained at any price. The very request would seem suspicious, and suspicion at that hour was enough to condemn a man unheard. The difficulties in the way would be enormous. Indeed, it would matter nothing. Arnold and Minette. They had fallen together and would lie together in one of the great common graves in which the dead would be buried. It would be little short of a mockery to have the burial service read over her, and had Arnold been consulted he would have preferred to lie beside her to being laid in a grave apart.

So after a pause of five minutes Cuthbert moved away without venturing a single look back at the group huddled down by the wall, but walked away feeling crushed and overwhelmed by the untimely fate that had befallen two persons of whom he had seen so much during the past year, and feeling as feeble as he did when he first arose from his bed in the American ambulance.

Several times he had to pause and lean against the wall, and

when he had passed the barricade at the Place de la Concorde, towards which he had almost instinctively made his way, he sat down on one of the deserted seats in the Champs Elysées, and burst into tears. It had hardly come upon him as a surprise, for he had felt that, conspicuous as he had made himself, the chances of Arnold making his escape were small indeed, especially as Minette would cling to the Commune until the very end. Still it never struck him as being possible that he himself might witness the end. He had thought that the same obscurity that hung over the fate of most of the other leaders of the Commune would envelop that of Arnold. He would have fallen, but how or when would never have been known. He would simply have disappeared. Rumor would have mentioned his name for a few days, the rumor that was already busy with the fate of other leaders of the insurrection, and he had never dreamt that it would be brought home to him in this fashion. After a time Cuthbert pulled himself together, waited until a fiacre came along—for on this side of Paris things were gradually regaining their usual aspect—and then drove back to Passy.

"What is the matter, Cuthbert?" Mary exclaimed as she caught sight of his face. "Are you ill? You look terribly pale and quite unlike yourself. What has happened?"

"I have had a shock, Mary," he said, with a faint attempt at a smile, "a very bad shock. Don't ask me about it just at present. Please get me some brandy. I have never fainted in my life, but I feel very near it just at present."

Mary hurried away to Madame Michaud, who now always discrectly withdrew as soon as Cuthbert was announced, and returned with some cognac, a tumbler, and water. She poured him out a glass that seemed to herself to be almost alarmingly strong, but he drank it at a draught.

"Don't be alarmed, Mary," he said, with a smile, at the consternation in her face. "You won't often see me do this, and I can assure you that spirit-drinking is not an habitual vice with me, but I really wanted it then. They are still fighting fiercely from Porte St. Martin down to the Place de la Bastille. I be-

lieve all resistance has been crushed out on the south side of the river, and in a couple of days the whole thing will be over."

"Fancy a week of fighting. It is awful to think of, Cuthbert. How many do you suppose will be killed altogether?"

"I have not the least idea, and I don't suppose it will ever be known; but if the resistance is as desperate for the next two days as it has been for the last three, I should say fully 20,000 will have fallen, besides those taken with arms in their hands, tried, and shot. I hear there are two general court-martials sitting permanently, and that seven or eight hundred prisoners are shot every day. Then there are some eighteen or twenty thousand at Versailles, but as these will not be tried until the fighting is over, and men's blood cooled down somewhat, no doubt much greater leniency will be shown."

"There is a terrible cloud of smoke over Paris, still."

"Yes, fresh fires are constantly breaking out. The Louvre is safe, and the firemen have checked the spread of the flames at the public buildings, but there are streets where every house is alight for a distance of a quarter of a mile; and yet, except at these spots, the damage is less than you would expect considering how fierce a battle has been raging. There are streets where scarce a bullet mark is to be seen on the walls or a broken pane of glass in a window, while at points where barricades have been defended, the scene of ruin is terrible."

Two days later a strange stillness succeeded the din and uproar that had for a week gone on without cessation night and day. Paris was conquered, the Commune was stamped out, its chiefs dead or fugitives, its rank and file slaughtered, or prisoners awaiting trial. France breathed again. It had been saved from a danger infinitely more terrible than a German occupation. In a short time the hotels were opened and visitors began to pour into Paris to gaze at the work of destruction wrought by the orgie of the Commune. One day Cuthbert, who was now installed in his own lodging, went up to Passy.

"I hear that the English Church is to be open to-morrow, Mary. I called on the clergyman to-day and told him that I should probably require his services next week."

"Cuthbert!" Mary exclaimed in surprise, "you cannot mean——" and a flush of color completed the sentence.

"Yes, that is just what I do mean, Mary. You have kept me waiting three years and I am not going to wait a day longer."

"I have given up much of my belief in women's rights, Cuthbert, but there are some I still maintain, and one of these is that a woman has a right to be consulted in a matter of this kind."

"Quite so, dear, and therefore I have left the matter open, and I will leave you to fix the day and you can choose any one you like from Monday to Saturday next week."

"But I must have time, Cuthbert," she said, desperately. "I have, of course, things to get."

"The things that you have will do perfectly well, my dear. Besides, many of the shops are open and you can get anything you want. As for a dress for the occasion, if you choose to fix Saturday you will have twelve days, which is twice as long as necessary. Putting aside my objection to waiting any longer I want to get away from here to some quiet place where we can forget the events of the past month, and get our nerves into working order again. If there is any reason that you can declare that you honestly believe to be true and valid of course I must give way, but if not let it be Saturday week. That is right. I see that you have nothing to urge," and a fortnight later they were settled in a châlet high up above the Lake of Lucerne.

René and Pierre acted as Cuthbert's witnesses at the marriage. Pierre had escaped before the fighting began. René had done service with the National Guard until the news came that the troops had entered Paris, then he had gone to M. Goudé's who had hidden him and seven or eight of the other students in an attic. When the troops approached, they had taken refuge on the roof and had remained there until the tide of battle had swept past, and they then descended, and arraying themselves in their painting blouses had taken up their work at the studio; and when, three days later, the general search for Communists began, they were found working so diligently that none suspected that they had ever fired a shot in the ranks of the Communists.

When the salon was opened, long after its usual time, Cuth-

bert's pictures were well hung and obtained an amount of praise that more than satisfied him, although his wife insisted that they were not half as warm as the pictures deserved. It was not until they had been for some time in Switzerland that Mary had learned the details of the deaths of Arnold and Minette Dampierre. That both were dead she knew, for when she mentioned their names for the first time after the close of the fighting, Cuthbert told her that he had learned that both were dead, and begged her to ask no question concerning them until he himself returned to the subject.

Mary wrote to her mother a day or two after she was married giving her the news. An answer was received from Scarborough expressing great satisfaction, and saying that it was probable that the family would settle where they were. Neither Cuthbert nor his wife liked the thought of returning to England, and for the next five years remained abroad. After spending a few months at Dresden, Munich, Rome, and Florence, they settled at Venice. Cuthbert continued to work hard, and each year two or three of his pictures hung on the walls of the Academy and attracted much attention, and were sold at excellent prices. All his earnings in this way and the entire income of Fairclose were put aside to pay off the mortgage, and when, at the end of the five years, Cuthbert, his wife, and two children returned to Fairclose, the greater portion of the mortgage had been paid off, and three years later it was entirely wiped out.

Although very warmly received by the county, Cuthbert retained his preference for London, and during the winter six months always moved up to a house in the artists' quarter at St. John's Wood. Although he no longer painted as if compelled to do so for a living, he worked regularly and steadily while in town, and being able to take his time in carrying out his conceptions, his pictures increased in value and he took a place in the front rank of artists, and some fifteen years after the siege of Paris was elected Academician. Before this he had sold Fairclose and built himself a house in Holland Park, where he was able to indulge his love for art to the fullest extent.

Of his wife's family he saw but little. Mary's sisters both married before he and his wife returned from abroad. Mary went down occasionally to Scarborough, and stayed with her father and mother, but Mr. Brander steadily refused all invitations to visit them in London, and until his death, fifteen years later, never left Scarborough, where he became a very popular man, although no persuasions could induce him to take a part in any of its institutions or public affairs.

Cuthbert has often declared that the most fortunate event in his life was that he was a besieged resident in Paris through its two sieges. As for Mary she has been heard to declare that she has no patience, whatever, with the persons who frequent platforms and talk about women's rights.

Not far from the spot in la Chaise where the pits in which countless numbers of Communists were buried are situated, stands a small marble cross, on whose pedestal are inscribed the words:—"To the memory of Arnold Dampierre and his wife, Minette, whose bodies rest near this place."

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